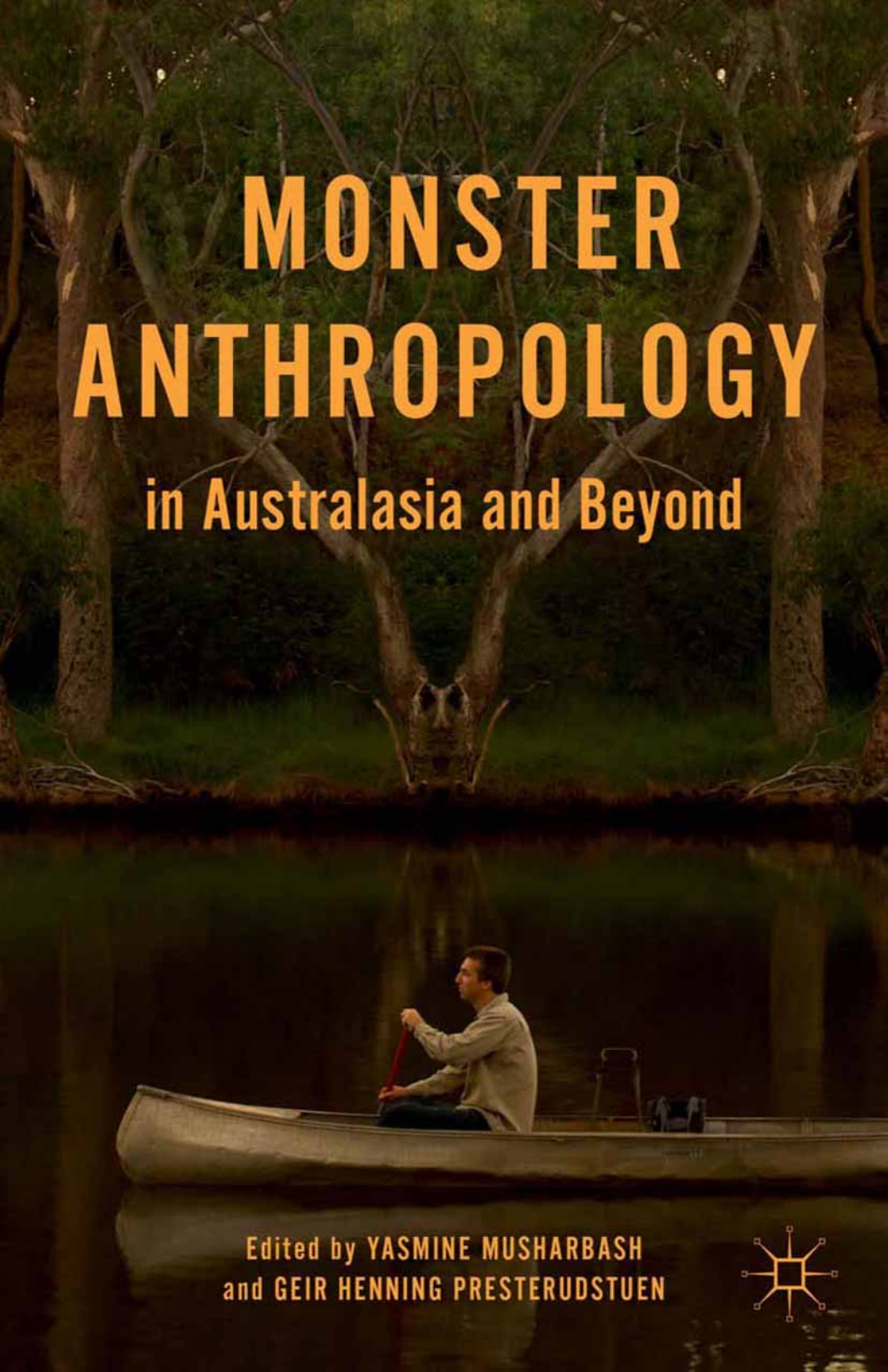
MONSTER ANTHROPOLOGY

in Australasia and Beyond



Edited by YASMINE MUSHARBASH
and GEIR HENNING PRESTERUDSTUEN

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Edited by Yasmine Musharbash and
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Chapter 1

Introduction: Monsters, Anthropology, and Monster Studies

Yasmine Musharbash

Every field-site has monsters—spooky, menacing, terrifying beings—who lurk in the shadows and the dark, under beds, in caves and lakes, beyond the line of sight, and in the imagination. Some cause mischief, others protect, a great number of them instill fear, many terrorize, and a few may even kill; all provide substance for conversation and, importantly, for action. Monsters are bloodcurdlingly potent of meaning and anthropology has engaged with them since its inception.[1] Yet, and curiously, anthropology has not substantially joined in with the burgeoning interdisciplinary field of monster studies. This is a relatively young field; Cohen's (1996) *Monster Culture (Seven Theses)*, while by no means the first endeavor, constitutes something of a foundation to the concerted interdisciplinary effort of studying monsters. Over the last decade or so, monster studies has mushroomed as a cornucopia of recent articles, edited volumes, journals, and books about monsters attests (including two new compendia, see Mittman and Dendle 2012; Picart and Browning 2012b; and an encyclopedia, see Weinstock 2014).[2]

The genesis of this book is impelled by our (the contributors') desire to open a dialogue between anthropology and the other disciplines interested in monsters: literature studies, media studies, cultural studies, history, gender studies, geography, architecture, philosophy, among others. I here briefly sketch, and in the remainder of this chapter, expound some of the ways in which anthropology can contribute to monster studies, and

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how it, in turn, can benefit from and engage with the potent and thrilling interdisciplinary debates about monsters currently taking place.

By choice of field-site and methodology, anthropologists are familiar with monsters above and beyond those we know from fiction, television, and the movies. This book is a step toward bringing analyses of locally specific monsters into conversation with research more commonly concerned with vampires, werewolves, Frankensteinian creations, and other members of the folkloristic and textual monster genealogies of the West.[3] Through in-depth case studies and deep ethnography, our book introduces a number of monsters to monster studies (Mamu, Kaji, and Anito, to name a few) and others that relate to but unsettle otherwise well-established monster bloodlines through their different socio-cultural positioning (e.g. ghosts in a rural Aboriginal mission or in Fiji).

Not only are our monsters *different*, they are also *real* in different ways. From an anthropological point of view, much of monster studies can appear somewhat narrow in its prevailing ideas of monsters' realities, being heavily focused on the gothic novel, film, and TV. The monsters that anthropologists encounter in their field-sites prowl the real world, not across the pages of books or on television and cinema screens. The question of how "real" monsters are (for our interlocutors, for ourselves) has long stimulated anthropologists, and we can draw on a rich repertoire of theoretical frameworks for conceptualizing alternate realities. This same question has only recently begun to emerge in monster studies (Luckhurst 2002; Poole 2011; Dendle 2012), and anthropological analyses of monsters in this vein can contribute significantly to a currently evolving interdisciplinary debate.

Most importantly, our monsters deeply affect the lives of those they haunt (as all contributors to this volume demonstrate). Taking seriously how the monstrous manifests locally and documenting the socio-culturally specific ways in which people relate to monsters reveals how people understand themselves, their world, and their position within it. In monster studies, such analyses tend to be diachronic, as exemplified in Stephen Asma's (2009) *On Monsters*.[4] He charts how in the broadly defined West, different monsters served different ages, sketching a monstrous genealogy from ancient Greek via biblical monsters, on to witches and then freaks, mutants, zombies, and cyborgs. Anthropology can contribute locally comparative understandings of monsters and thus show the global diversity of contemporary understandings of power relations, crises, inequalities, anxieties, and traumas.

In turn, the most revelatory element of monster studies to anthropology, I would suggest, is the concern with monsters and the monstrous as a broad umbrella under which to consider a plethora of gruesome beings and their

workings. While monster studies gainfully bring together, say, zombies, Cthulhu, and Freddy Krueger, more often than not anthropologists focus their efforts on distinct monsters—they work either on witches, or spirits, or the devil—but make little or no reference to an overarching theorization of monsters as a phenomenon. As anthropologists are interested in, and concerned with, local manifestations, geographically confined paradigms have flourished (e.g. witch in Africanist anthropology, malicious spirit in Oceanian anthropology). As a result, pan-geographic conceptual engagement with monsters as a category has been stymied.[5] Why it is worthwhile rectifying this will be my main concern in this introductory chapter.

In the following, I elaborate on these themes with a view to informing both audiences (the anthropological, and that of the interdisciplinary monster studies) of what the other has to offer, and outline how the contributors to this volume take up the matters in various ways. I proceed by first delineating the meanings of the term "monster" itself. This is followed by four sections concerned, respectively, with:

1. the indeterminacy of monster realities,
2. the particularities of the monstrous body,
3. how monsters are contingent on the humans they haunt, and
4. monsters and change.

In a vein similar to Cohen (1996, 4), these are offered as "a set of breakable postulates" in an attempt to find some common ground of monster traits relevant both to anthropology and to interdisciplinary monster studies. I conclude by summarizing what the study of monsters may do to benefit anthropology and by detailing the organization of this volume.

The Meaning of the Term

Etymologically, the term "monster" originates from the Latin *monstrum*. It has a twinned meaning, assimilating the two verbs *monere* (to warn or admonish) and *demonstrare* (to reveal, show, or indicate), to create a sense of an embodied omen or portent.[6] Monsters were indicators of strangeness and danger, hybrid marvels revealing distance from the familiar and the safe. They populated the extremes of the known world, as described for example in *Naturalis Historia* by Pliny the Elder ([1601] 1949) during the first century AD: dragons, giants, mermaids, and any number of marvelous beings, some one-legged, with feet so large they can be used as umbrellas, men with dog-heads, beasts of unimaginable size and of fantastic form, their bodies hybrid, with the wings of a bird, say, and the scales of a reptile.

These monsters were "unnatural" not in the sense of not existing (not being part of the world), but by being too big, too different, or too strange. They were *something other* than that which is familiar, which is why they dwelled at the margins. This idea of monsters persisted long into the Middle Ages (see, among many others, Cohen 2000; Asma 2009). This is evidenced, among other things, in medieval *mappaemundi*, the emergent maps of the world (which incorporate knowledge about the world by Greek and Roman writers). Here be dragons, or *HIC SVNT DRACONES*, it says on *La Fleur des Histoires* (1460–1470), and on other maps *hic abundant leones*, or *hic grifes*. Always, the most fearsome monsters are allocated in the greatest numbers at the furthest reaches of the world. As Van Duzer (2012, 431) puts it:

> implicit in most accounts of local monsters is the idea that the region near the teller is normal, and the knowledge from the experience of everyday life that monsters are known to be a small percentage of the overall population, whereas at the edges of the world, we hear of little except monsters.

Monsters lurked at the borderlands between the known and the unknown, heralded peril through their very presence, and signified jeopardy through their abnormal bodies. They truly were portents of danger in the original sense of the word. Since then, the world shifted and transformed many times over, and with it transmogrified its monsters, as well as their very meanings (for a comprehensive history of monsters in the West, see Asma 2009).[7]

Dendle (2012, 442) astutely describes the term monster as unstable, elaborating that "by definition it remains at the boundary of epistemological comfort, even as science progresses and taxonomies continue to shift and evolve." He describes the biggest difference between the original term and its contemporary usage in relation to the realness ascribed to the monstrous subject:

> For most people speaking modern European languages, however, a "monster" (and its cognates) implies additionally a being that is fictional by definition. In this sense our modern word is not the same as *monstrum*, and has no precise cognates in Greek or Latin.
>
> (Dendle 2012, 440).

After asserting that "monsters, of course, do not exist," Mittman (2012, 4) elaborates on the qualities of reality ascribed to monsters during the Middle Ages and in the here and now:

> I am often asked if medieval people believed that the monsters—the one-legged men, elves, dragons and so on—were real … The short (if slightly

> misleading) answer is generally, yes they did. This binary of real and unreal, though, is as problematic when applied to monsters as it is when applied to scholarship [as it implies] that the "real" and the "unreal" exist in a binary arrangement, while careful consideration of the monstrous reveals a great deal of what Cohen (1996) has termed (in another context) "difficult middles."

While the question about the reality of monsters held no traction in antiquity or during the Middle Ages, with developments in Western Europe from the Renaissance and Reformation, through the Enlightenment and Scientific Revolution, monsters were relegated to the realm of fiction. Since much of monster studies has literally been concerned with fictional monsters, the (new) idea that monsters, of course, are *not* real was not in doubt. As Mittman and Dendle demonstrate by taking up this question, however, this ground is shifting.

In this volume, we capitalize on the elementary instability of the term monster which allows it to adjust to the ontology of its users. We understand the term monster to offer the potentiality of conceptualizing monstrous beings as real, as well as the potentiality of understanding them to be fictitious, and, most importantly, the potentiality of catering to both ways of thinking simultaneously.

Monster Realities Are Indeterminate

Much of monster studies interprets monsters as imaginary beings that *stand for* something else; a reality unambiguously captured by Cohen, who said that as a "construct and a projection, the monster exists only to be read . . . Like a letter on the page, the monster signifies something other than itself" (Cohen 1996, 4). And anthropologists would agree that monsters are "good to think with." The problem, however, is that metaphoric readings of monsters render them immaterial in phenomenological terms. They slight the experiential fear of monstrous reality. When Warlpiri people stay awake at night to protect themselves and their families from prowling Kurdaitcha (Musharbash, Chapter 3); when Tao people lie about their plans so as not to be overheard by Anito (Funk, Chapter 9); when Indo-Fijians avoid certain places (Presterudstuen, Chapter 8), they are afraid, not of metaphors but of mortal peril. If the *monstrum* indeed is "that which reveals" and "warns," it is obvious that we ought to take our interlocutors' perceptions of, and actions in response to, monsters seriously—no matter whether our interlocutors are tribes people, village dwellers, or movie goers. But herein also lies the rub: The fear experienced when *watching* a movie (about *fictional* monsters) is qualitatively different

(e.g. Carroll 1990; Skal 1993) from the fear of monsters that one believes are out in the real world. As a result, monster studies and anthropology produced different understandings of monsters' realities. However, as I hope to demonstrate, the two perspectives seem to become more compatible with recent developments. I briefly sketch anthropological approaches, before providing some historical background to the emergence of contemporary monster studies approaches to fear and the reality of monsters.

Being confronted with our interlocutors' fears of monsters elicits different responses in anthropologists. Most take a broadly relativist stance, focusing on "emic" understandings, as is common practice in anthropology since, at least, Evans-Pritchard's (1937) canonical work on witchcraft among the Azande. Very few anthropological studies truly fall into the trap Turner (1993, 9) sketched: "They might have obtained valuable material, but they have been operating with the wrong paradigm, that of the positivists' denial" (but see Forth 2008). Some anthropologists *struggle* with the ontological implications of monsters, both in the field and in the practice of writing (Klenk 2004). A poignant example of this can be found in Presterudstuen's chapter (Chapter 8), in which he tackles head-on the ontological conflict arising out of a shared ghost encounter with one of his interlocutors, who saw a ghost while he saw a human girl. Other anthropologists resolve this tension through psychological or psychoanalytic explanations for the presence of monsters (Gilmore 2003). Many anthropologists provide psychological readings, sympathetic to the socio-cultural context the monsters are found in (Obeyesekere 1967; 1969; Eickelkamp 2004, and see also Eickelkamp, Chapter 4; Morton, Chapter 5). Or, they understand monsters as an essential ingredient of an Indigenous semiotics, illustrating how the world is understood and made sense of through human/monster relations (Stasch 2007; 2009). Others again embrace their research subjects' position and take the existence of monsters as given (Alimardanian, Chapter 6; Turner 1993; Jackson 1998, 160–67; Bubandt 2009). Onnudottir's chapter (Chapter 11) is particularly stimulating in this context, as she is writing about Icelandic monsters from the auto-ethnographical position of an Icelander. In short, the anthropological approaches to the question of the reality of monsters are vast and varied, but most see monsters as something *more* than pure fiction, not least because they are intimately familiar with their interlocutors' responses to the presence of monsters.

In monster studies, however, textualizing monsters has a long intellectual trajectory, fed by rationalism on the one hand and the textual genesis of many of the West's monsters on the other. Textual analysis of monsters provides scintillating insights into the social and political state of things. Not only are there a plethora of such metaphoric readings, but they are

deeply perceptive as just three examples regarding just one monster, the vampire, will attest: There is Moretti's classic Marxist analysis of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* revealing that through sucking the blood (labor) from the living, their strength becomes his and "like capital, Dracula is impelled towards a continuous growth, an unlimited expansion of his domain" (1982, 73). And Nina Auerbach's (1995) celebrated insight that, as Judith Halberstam (1995, 32) deftly put it, each age "gets the vampire it deserves." Or take the dazzling array of writing dedicated to the vampire as metaphor, which includes countless articles as well as entire edited volumes (Gordon and Hollinger 1997; Day 2006).

However, there is a discernible shift underway from the purely textual toward more tangible, embodied linkages between monsters and the world. To stay with vampires as a case in point they, true to form, adapted to the current zeitgeist and—as it is phrased in *True Blood*—"came out of the coffin." Today, they live among us, frequent the same bars, marry humans, and they participate in human politics. Contemporary vampires are (being portrayed as) *real* members of society. This is significantly and crucially different from earlier depictions, which saw them either as purely fictitious or as monsters whose existence was known only to a few insiders (a troupe of Van Helsings across the ages, for example Buffy and her friends). This movement from fictional, to known by a few insiders, to public, is mirrored in the way the erstwhile ground-breaking *X-Files* motto "I want to believe" now seems outdated.

Historian W. Scott Poole's (2011) analysis, *Monsters in America*, is a brilliant example of this emergent trend of taking the reality of monsters seriously. Beginning at the time of colonization, and working his way to the present, he links the emergence of specific monsters during specific times to contemporaneous traumatic events (e.g. medical and pharmaceutical experiments conducted on the poor and the interned, and the advent of alien abductions and probing). As he demonstrates, beyond the question of the ontological reality of monsters lies a plethora of material consequences related to their perceived existence:

> It is not enough to call these beliefs metaphors when they shape actual historical behavior or act as anxious reminders of inhuman historical acts, a cultural memory of slaughter. How limp and pallid to use the term metaphor for cultural structures that can burn the innocent to death, lynch them, imprison them, or bomb them.
>
> (Poole 2011, 25)

As the contributions to this volume demonstrate, anthropology, which has not so far been concerned with monsters as such but rather with locally

specific categories of monsters, can contribute valuable insights into the continuum between symbolic structures and lived experience. In this vein, anthropology can make significant contributions toward contemporary understandings of monsters in monster studies, which are in flux regarding the question of monstrous realities. The elementary instability of the term monster provides a bridge for anthropology and monster studies to meet and explore what monsters *are* today.

Monstrous Bodies Rupture Classification

Perhaps more important to anthropology than to monster studies is the question of how to understand the monstrous body. The principles defining it, I propose, unite the various monsters anthropology has commonly dealt with separately. A vital clue toward this is provided by the original Greek monsters. Some of these we are still familiar with—for example, griffins, centaurs, and sphinxes—while others have no traction today, like cynocephali, monocoli, syopods, and blemmyae. What they all have in common are their "fantastic" bodies, if we understand the term in its original sense. Hailing from Greek *phantastikós*, it means being able to present or show (to the mind), in short, being imaginable, as opposed to imaginary. Greek monsters have bodies that can be imagined by combining or extending shapes that exist in the world.[8]

Some have hybrid bodies (horse *and* human, snake *and* bird), others are human-like "races," but their bodies are physically too different to be considered human (tribes of headless or one-legged people, and so forth), and in some cases sheer size constitutes monstrousness (giants and legendary animals *bigger* than, say, elephants). Put differently, we think of monsters through forms we are familiar with (horns, legs, hair, scales, etc.), but reassembled "unnaturally." As Asma (2009, 125) puts it: "monsters, from Aristotle's time to the present, always disrupt neat categories of taxonomy." A core defining feature of contemporary monsters is that they continue to embody such taxonomic disturbance; and it can be thrown into sharp relief by considering the impossibility of imagining what I will here call a purely monstrous body, one that is not made of or resembling other knowable and classifiable bodies. Neither in monster studies nor in the ethnographic field do we encounter a purely monstrous body; our monsters are always tied to, in fact crosscut, our way of seeing, classifying, and knowing the world. The bodies of monsters are either in-between other classifiable and knowable bodies or *more* or *less* than one single classifiable category.

Take, for example, a society that taxonomically differentiates between humans, animals, and machines. Members of this society have very clear

notions about what the bodies of animals, humans, and machines look like, and distinguish between them as clearly distinct. In such a society, the monstrous body can take form in two kinds of ways (as illustrated in Figures 1.1a and 1.1b, inspired by the models of Csordas 2012). It can be a hybrid between (at least) two categories: A centaur, for example, is neither fully human nor fully animal, but in-between the two; or a Borg, being neither fully human, nor fully machine, but both (see Figure 1.1a). Or, its body can differ from any of the categories by being *more* or *less* than the category itself and thus moving out of the clearly bounded category and *toward* the pure monster: A ghost, for example, is *less* than the human it once was, now lacking corporality; or a griffin, being both eagle *and* lion is *more* than (one) animal (see Figure 1.1b).

Imagine that same society before they had a category of machine. Monsters would only have been hybrids of humans and animals, or more or less than either humans or animals. Something like monstrous cyborgs could not exist (be imagined) before a category of the artifical, or the machine, becomes part of their schema. As machines enter the world of this society, and thus their taxonomic schema, so the possibilities for monsters with part-machine bodies arise. In this vein, one can establish a genealogy of monsters with part-artifical bodies, who have Frankenstein—pointedly created at the apex of the industrial revolution—as their ancestor (Graham 2002). As new categories appear in the taxonomic schema, so do new monsters. Naturally, the more categories that exist, the greater the number of forms the monstrous body may take.[9]

Additionally, the bodies of some monsters are liminal by transgressing the otherwise clear-cut boundary between two states of animation: morphing between dead *or* alive; or being dead *and* alive simultaneously; or being *neither* dead *nor* alive.[10] Finally, monsters may possess any number of abilities that transcend the natural faculties belonging to the categories they

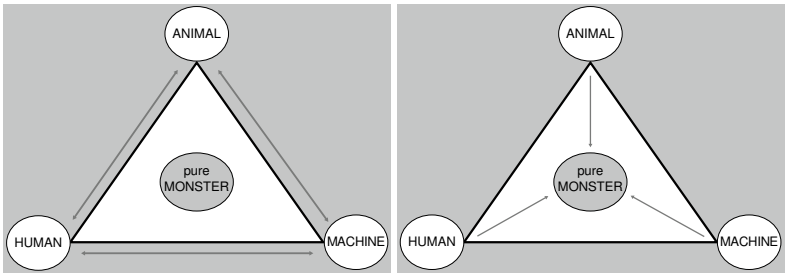

Figure 1.1 Monstrous Body In-Between Categories (a), and Being More or Less than One Category (b)

transcend: better sense of smell, being able to fly, or making themselves invisible, supernatural strength, and so forth.

Category crossings that involve the human body are most easily illustrated by considering ghosts, vampires, zombies, and werewolves.[11] They all have human-*like* bodies, but their physique is also *more*, or *less*, or *different* from the normal human form: Ghosts have the same shape as humans but are incorporeal; vampires have human corporeality but possess many superhuman abilities, for example being able to fly or to de-materialize; zombies are resurrected but degraded versions of the dead, having human form but lacking will, emotion, and, sometimes, consciousness; and werewolves can, or must, transform their human form into that of the wolf.

I propose that these rules about the body hold for all monsters. They certainly apply to the monsters presented in this book. We offer ethnographic explorations of monsters who

1. resemble but differ from the human form:

   Alimardanian presents the ghost of Burnt Woman, who haunts the locality and, especially, visits men at an Aboriginal mission in eastern Australia. Her body is incorporeal, but not invisible, and highly sensuous: She can appear beautiful and alluring or ugly and terrifying, her screams can be heard by all, and she can cause sensations in those she haunts, from lust, to a palpable chill, and terror. Presterudstuen depicts how some Fijian ghosts morph between corporality and incorporality. Funk's Anito are interesting here, being linked to the human body through absence. As Funk puts it, the corpse "is a hybrid of a visible and tactile human body but with no life attached to it," while the Anito are that life, and, once detached from their former body, become monstrous. Musharbash introduces Kurdaitcha, wildly feared by local Aboriginal people, but mistaken for humans by non-Indigenous folk who fail to recognize their monstrous nature. Onnudottir describes how Icelandic Huldufólk can lure humans into perdition so easily exactly because they can appear in human form.
2. have bodies in-between human and animals:

   The polymorphous Mamu (in Eickelkamp) and Arrentye (in Morton) can appear as humans and morph into animals as well as other shapes, and Manning attends to the twinning of goats and Kaji arguing that "it is very common to use the liminality of the goat, 'the least tame of all domestic animals' (Vernant 1991, 203), as a model of a specific kind of alterity, and monsters and demons frequently borrow their visual iconography from goats" (Stewart 1991, 182–83).

3. merge different animals or are more or less than animals:
   This includes the Latharr-ghun (in Thurman), a big, black, scaly dragon living and travelling in Northern Australia's caverns and underground tunnels, much larger and much more dangerous than the small goannas it resembles and Onnudottir's Icelandic dragons or Drekar.
4. have monstrous bodies according to different category subversions:
   Our starkest example of this is presented in Thurman's chapter, where she introduces Minmin Lights. Their bodies are, literally, lights that can shift in shape and size, hover and fly, thus crossing categories between the animate and the inanimate. Also into this category fall the demons in Haddon's chapter which can turn into humans.

In summary, monstrousness is marked through monstrous bodies, which do not neatly fit into the classificatory schema of the respective people they haunt. Crucially, however, and as unicorns, Tinkerbell, or Yoda illustrate, a monstrous body on its own is not enough. This matter, following Weinstock (2014, 1), can be postulated as a problem; as he puts it monsters

> are ontological puzzles that demand solutions. They are things that should not be, but nevertheless are—and their existence therefore raises vexing questions about humanity's understanding of and place in the universe.

Or, and following a longstanding anthropological tradition originating in Mary Douglas's (1969) work, the very fact that monsters confound categories propels us to tackle them as culturally legible, locally specific answers (see also Turner 1967, Chapter 4). Answers that need to be grounded in the understanding that the presence of monsters is inextricably intertwined with the lives of those they haunt (and whose categories they confound, see also Morton, Chapter 5).

Monsters Are Contingent on the Humans They Haunt

No matter whether monsters are evil, mischievous, protective, or lasciviously seductive, their actions (as much as their bodies) are culturally specific, and they *target* and make sense only in particular societies: An Anito in Paris, Huldufólk in the Australian tropics, or a Minmin Light in LA would elicit either very different, or just as likely, no responses at all from humans there. Some monsters distinguish certain humans as victims, ignoring others. In this vein, Fijian ghosts choose whom to appear to according to racial and ethnic categories and contexts (Presterudstuen, Chapter 8); Burnt Woman's haunting is gendered (Alimardanian, Chapter 6); Kurdaitcha kill local Aboriginal people and do not even frighten non-Indigenous folk

(Musharbash, Chapter 3); while, on the contrary, Minmin Lights elicit a mild unease in local people but can frighten outsiders (Thurman, Chapter 2). Monsters are bound to the people they haunt, to *their* humans.

Anthropology provides significant insights into such mutual monster-human belonging on two different levels. Firstly, anthropology is focused on documenting social practices, aiming to study people's understandings of the world through their ways of *being* in the world. In regard to monsters, such social practices include a multitude of socio-culturally specific gestures, actions, and skills attuned to the presence of local monsters. For example, as Thurman (Chapter 2) describes, when local monsters threaten foreigners, resident Mak Mak Marranunggu avert the danger by planting some of their own armpit sweat on the foreigner. As Alimardanian (Chapter 6) illustrates, people at the mission *know* what to do when they hear Burnt Woman wail nearby. Warlpiri people continually scan their environment for the presence of Kurdaitcha, which they can tell by certain bird calls, arbitrary winds, and unusual foot tracks (Musharbash, Chapter 3), and their Anangu neighbors recruit specialist healers to extract Mamu once it has entered a person's body (Eickelkamp, Chapter 4). Each such practice or gesture says something about the way in which a local world is configured and indicates, also, how monsters *fit* into specific cultural contexts.

Secondly, anthropology takes seriously what local monsters *mean*, what they stand for, not metaphorically, but how, in Poole's (2011) sense, their very presence expresses that which is of utter importance. Every chapter in this volume pursues this question. For example, Morton (Chapter 5) examines the monstrous Arrentye, who plague Arrernte people in central Australia, and asks the critical question why the Dreaming contains such nightmarish things.[12] His answer arises out of analysis of the interconnectedness between the monstrous and the very Arrernte ways of being in the world. While taking entirely different analytical paths, this interconnectedness is echoed in Onnudottir (Chapter 11) and Funk (Chapter 9), who show how Icelandic monsters and the Anito, respectively, define the very being-in-the-world of their respective hauntees: Icelanders and Tao people would not be who they are without their monsters. While true, to some extent, also for the Mak Mak Marranunggu (Thurman, Chapter 2), their monsters mark something else even more starkly: the way in which Mak Mak Marranunggu relations to their country are threatened within the Australian state. Similarly, the ghosts in Fiji that Presterudstuen (Chapter 8) is concerned with, highlight local power relations and conflicts revolving around land, tradition, and ethnicity. Kurdaitcha (Musharbash, Chapter 3), in turn, embody the threat of the unbearably high neocolonial mortality rate. As the ethnographic chapters of this volume demonstrate, monsters are always bound to specific socio-cultural contexts, and within them, signify the issue that most matters to the people they haunt.

Such a geographically comparative perspective on monster-human ties augments the diachronic approaches prevalent in monster studies. There, the way in which monsters are contingent on their particular humans has been explored most extensively by investigating the fit between certain monsters and certain times. In this vein, Noël Carroll says that "What presumably happens in certain historical circumstances is that the horror genre is capable of incorporating or assimilating general social anxieties into its iconography of fear and distress" (1990, 207). Accordingly, he links the emergence of German Expressionist horror movies to the crisis of the Weimar Republic, Universal Studio's horror classics to the Great Depression, and the 1950s sci-fi/horror resurgence to the Cold War. In fact, there is a large literature detailing how certain monsters gain prominence during historical periods where they are expressive of prevalent fears, only to be replaced by new monsters as history rolls on (see also Asma 2009; Poole 2011).[13] Combining the temporal and spatial perspectives, it seems safe to say that monsters are deeply embedded in the socio-cultural contexts of the respective human societies they haunt, and as human societies change, so do monsters.

Monsters and Change

Anthropology has a long history of investigating continuity and change, and can contribute new angles to diachronic understandings of monster succession. First, we can add a complimentary perspective to the emergence of new monsters (with new fears, as monster studies proposes, or new niches for them to haunt, as anthropology would put forward), namely, insights into the fading away of monsters. Monsters lose their significance with the introduction of new and/or outside influences, not just where prevalent fears are superseded by new ones. Chief among these is the introduction of Christianity around the world, and the concomitant extinction or expulsion of local monsters (among many others, see Eickelkamp, Chapter 4; Presterudstuen, Chapter 8; Tomlinson 2012). Deep ethnography makes tangible the locally diverse orientations toward monsters at any time and, with this, the unevenness of historical transformations. Another case is the introduction of artificial light: Hastrup (1990) and Heijnen (2005) demonstrate how this had a significant impact on the displacement of Icelandic Huldufólk from urban centers. Urbanization in itself is another major cause for monstrous displacement or transformation, as is detailed by Manning (Chapter 10), who follows a Georgian monster from the village to the city and sketches the changes it undergoes in the process.

The cross-cultural comparison of monsters across the globe that anthropology affords suggests an increasing prominence of monsters that

display a proximity between the humans they haunt and themselves, their bodies, and their traits. Put in terms of the diagrams used above, the majority of monsters in our volume as well as contemporary monsters in monster studies can be located in the shaded area in Figure 1.2.

I propose that this finding may well correlate to the rapid change that most people around the globe experience and the fact that these particular monsters are more adept at keeping up with change.

This point is an extension of Nina Auerbach's celebrated assertion that vampires are more versatile than any other monsters because they "are disturbingly close to the mortals they prey on. I can think of no other monsters who are so receptive" (Auerbach 1995, 6). I take from her the insight that the possession of human-like traits is essential for monsters to be able to transform and keep up with the massive transformations the people they haunt are experiencing (see also Musharbash, this volume). I amend that vampires are not the only monsters capable of such adaptation.

Perhaps the weakest, but still pertinent, other examples are zombies. The original rise of the Living Dead in popular culture is associated by Poole (2011, 193–217) with the linkage between *Night of the Living Dead* on the one hand, and the "body count culture" that developed during the Vietnam War on the other:

> The Vietnam War did not create the zombie genre or make way for the vampire. However, like the Civil War, Vietnam produced a very graphic iconography of death and bodily dissolution that has remained a permanent part of American culture. (199)

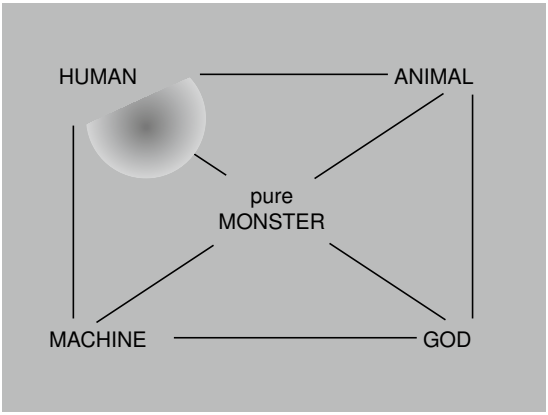

Figure 1.2 Monsters Close to Humans Capable of Change

Zombies then, in succession, became embodiments of rising apocalyptic tendencies percolating in the United States, fear of AIDS, and post-9/11 paranoia about terrorism, mutating with each role. In fact, there exists a plethora of interpretations of zombies ranging from metaphors of mindless consumerism, questions about the humanness of humanity, biopolitics, migration, and postcolonialism (for a selection, see Aizenberg 1999; Comaroff and Comaroff 2002; Harper 2002; Bishop 2010; Moreman and Rushton 2011; Smith 2011). But Auerbach is right in asserting that the vampire itself (above and beyond the meanings attached to it) changes more, and more significantly than the zombie (at least, until *Warm Bodies*). The werewolf is another example of a monster with human traits persisting and, to some extent, changing across and in tune with historical time (see Douglas 1992); in the *Underworld* series werewolves are more capable of change than vampires.

In anthropology, there is a flood of examples of human-like monsters adapting and keeping up with the times (e.g. Bubandt 2008; 2009; 2012; Blanes and Espírito Santo 2014). Examples we present in this volume include, but are not limited to, Georgian Kaji (Manning, Chapter 10), Central Australian Kurdaitcha (Musharbash, Chapter 3), and Fijian ghosts (Presterudstuen, Chapter 8). This trend toward more human-like monsters could well indicate that with rapid contemporary change other monsters cannot keep up. This monstrous development in turn says something about our anthropo-centric era or, alternatively, that there exists a bias toward human-like monsters in academia as well as in contemporary popular media.

Conclusion and Rationale

I hope to have shown a number of angles from which anthropology can enter current debates in monster studies: by providing ethnographic explorations of monsters different from those in the West, by contributing to deliberations on the monstrous body, by exploring the terrain of monstrous reality, and by adding insights about monsters and change, among others. What remains for me to do is to condense the above deliberations into a succinct response to the challenge of what anthropology can gain from engaging with monsters.

I propose that conceptualizing local manifestations, creatures, and beings that haunt our field-sites under the broad umbrella "monster" allows three immediately useful processes to take place:

1. increasing comparative possibilities by bringing together ethnographic material we hitherto investigated in either geographic or analytical isolation,

2. assisting in breaking out of the paradigms associated with particular types of haunting (e.g. the anthropology of witchcraft) or particular types of monsters (e.g. the anthropology of spirits), and
3. expanding the scope of anthropological analyses of monstrous beings by absorbing interdisciplinary impetus.

Put differently, accepting "monster" as a conceptually meaningful term allows comparison between otherwise disparate ethnographies—for example, Gordillo's (2004) *Landscapes of Devils: Tensions of Place and Memory in the Argentinean Chaco*, Stasch's (2009) *Society of Others: Kinship and Mourning in a West Papuan Place*, Boddy's (1989) *Wombs and Alien Spirits: Women,Men, and the Zar Cult in Northern Sudan*, and Ram's (2013) *Fertile Disorder: Spirit Possession and Its Provocation of the Modern*—and, simultaneously derive insights relevant for, in my case, the study of Kurdaitcha in central Australia. Such wide comparison allows novel perspectives into what haunts our field-sites, and how to understand the meanings that flow from this. Accepting monsters as a category means we can interrogate such creatures, our interlocutors' ways of relating to them, and what they say about the world from angles surpassing local paradigms and those associated with particular types of monsters. Further, we have more case studies, theories, and perspectives to explore in our analyses if we draw on interdisciplinary material. In tandem, the rewards flowing from accepting the term "monster" as a broad umbrella term mean reconfiguring the ways in which anthropology engages with, conceptualizes, and analyses the creatures haunting our field-sites everywhere and everywhen. As we hope to show throughout the chapters collated in this volume, this is a monstrously rewarding exercise.

Keeping in mind that this is the first anthropological volume bringing participant observation-based accounts and analyses of disparate creatures together under the umbrella term monster, we have arranged the following chapters in such a way that the reader can use the earlier chapters to reflect on those that follow. Furthermore, by using Australia and the Pacific region as a starting point for an analysis of the monstrous and its role in social relations that stretches via Asia to include European localities, we invert longstanding Eurocentric discourses both in anthropology and monster studies.

As Figure 1.3 illustrates, the volume's ethnographic explorations begin in north Australia (Thurman, Chapter 2), providing a counterpoint to the ensuing three chapters from central Australia (Musharbash, Chapter 3; Eickelkamp, Chapter 4; Morton, Chapter 5). These, in turn, provide but a glimpse of the manifold monstrous creatures roaming the desert interior, as well as three different anthropological approaches to understanding the

Figure 1.3 Geographical Locations of Chapters

meanings embodied in their presence. These four "remote" Aboriginal monster explorations are then contrasted with analysis of a ghost from "settled" Australia, roaming around a mission on the southeastern seaboard (Alimardanian, Chapter 6). Next, the Aboriginal Australian monsters are juxtaposed with an example of monsters haunting non-Aboriginal Australia, in this case demons at the Hare Krishna temple in Sydney (Haddon, Chapter 7). From here, we move in a big arc outward, first to a consideration of ghosts in Fiji (Presterudstuen, Chapter 8), on to spirits on the Taiwanese Island of Lanyu (Funk, Chapter 9), and then to Georgia and its Kaji (Manning, Chapter 10). The last chapter brings the reader to Iceland, and an auto-ethnographic investigation of Icelandic monsters (Onnudottir, Chapter 11). Each of these chapters provides analytical insights about its people, stemming from understanding the presence of the monsters that haunt them. All pay special attention to the ways in which monsters are integrated into local discourses, and highlight how monsters impact local constructions of identities, belonging, social relations as well as how they might highlight crises, social rifts, traumas, and inequality.

In the afterword, Rupert Stasch provides a final ethnographic example of monsters in West Papua and reflexively ties together different analytical, ethnographic, and theoretical strands that run through the chapters of this volume. He identifies how the monsters contained in the volume highlight normative order through violating it, as well as the intensity of moral and emotional investments people make onto "their" monsters. He pinpoints how our monsters triangulate better understanding of interethnic relations, considers the pragmatic life of monster categories, and closes with considerations about the mutuality of monster and place concepts. The afterword does not mirror but refracts and rethinks what is contained in this volume by tying the multiple threads that connect the chapters to each other back to the core concerns of anthropology.

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assistance, and to friends and colleagues for numerous stimulating monster conversations. I am deeply grateful to the ARC for Future Fellowship FT130100415, which allowed me to pursue research for this chapter (and book) in much more depth than would otherwise have been possible.

Notes

1. Monsters populate the pages of *The Golden Bough* (Frazer 1890), and many classic ethnographies that followed. Among a myriad others, Malinowski describes a "monstrously big stingaree" that "flops across the village," enters a woman's hut and "to the tune of a ditty cuts off the woman's finger" (Malinowski [1926] 1971, 22–23), or, Mulukwausi, the deadly flying witches, and Kwita, "an enormous octopus so gigantic that it would cover a whole village with its body; its arms are thick as coco-nut palms," as well as "big, live stones, which lie in wait for sailing canoes, run after them, jump up and smash them to pieces" (Malinowski 1922, 76, 234–35, 241). Monsters in Boas's oeuvre include a cornucopia of Kwakiutl and Tsimshian monsters (see among others Boas 1935; Boas [1888] 1966) as well as Inuit ones, such as the Kalopaling, a "fabulous being" that appears like a human in a feathered outfit but lives under the sea and can capsize ships, or the Uissuit, a "strange people that live in the sea. They are dwarfs and are frequently seen," and the Tornit, a people who shared the land with the Inuit many years ago, "much taller than the Inuit [with] very long legs and arms. Almost all of them were blear eyed. They were extremely strong" (Boas 1964, 212–13, 226–28). As a final example, Radcliffe-Brown discusses the Lau, spirits who eat the flesh of the dead, may cause illness or death, are considered to be more dangerous to strangers than locals, but can also be friends with magic users (Radcliffe-Brown 1922, 136–39).
2. Next to the substantial and ever-growing literature, also relevant are the conference series *Monsters and the Monstrous* and *Monstrous Geographies* currently in their eleventh and third run, respectively.
3. Monster studies certainly encompasses research on non-Western monsters (Mittman and Dendle 2012, for example, attempt to cover much of the globe); the point I am making is that those are the exception rather than the rule. This is illustrated also in the list of entries in the encyclopedia of literary monsters (Weinstock 2014), with significantly more Western than non-Western monsters, including the regional subcategories of demon, ghost, and witch/wizard.
4. I am not claiming that no comparative work exists (for one prominent example, see Ng's work, 2007; 2012), but that there is a predominance of investigation of historical succession.
5. In this context, David Gilmore's (2003) *Monsters* needs to be mentioned, as the one volume we could find that purports to provide an anthropological examination of monsters across time and space. Gilmore's understanding of monsters as a psychological necessity manifested in folklore, however, sees monsters firmly dwelling in the mind and in stories. This is a different kind of

anthropology to the one we foster in this volume, where we aim to locate monsters in ethnography and, thus, in the world.

6. Less common, but also in use, is the term teratology (Picart and Browning 2012a, 1), from the Greek term *tera* for monsters. Predominantly, though, this is used to designate the study of birth defects.
7. We are not concerned with humans who have been attributed monstrousness either because of their deeds (e.g. Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot) or because of their unusual physical appearance (as happened, for example, in the so-called freak shows of the colonial period, discussed, among a great many others, by Bogdan 1988; Thomson 1996; Bondeson 1999; Hoffmann 2005).
8. For a fascinating history of the rise of hybrid monsters, or, as he calls them "composites," during the prehistoric era in Mesopotamia, combining archaeological evidence with cognitive science, see Wengrow (2014).
9. Incidentally, a schema that has gods as a distinct category illuminates why Western scholars misread artistic representations of Indian gods as monsters (Mitter 1992), having no notion of the body of gods themselves, they could not but see monsters.
10. A further distinction is made by Martha Macintyre (1995), who discusses solidity/density versus insubstantiality of the body in regard to spirit and witch bodies in Papua New Guinea.
11. Please note that I do not mean to reduce monster studies to these most familiar monsters, I draw on them exactly because they are familiar to readers not well-versed in this area.
12. For a selection of monsters from different Dreamings across Aboriginal Australia including art works depicting them, see Nicholls (2014).
13. In a small, but relevant, digression I would like to refer the reader to Joanna Bourke's (2005) brilliant cultural history of fear in Britain and the United States from the late nineteenth century to today. While she does not relate fears to their embodiment in monsters, she does provide a marvelous portrait of prevalent public fears, and how one replaces the next in tandem with historical events.

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Chapter 2

Cave Men, Luminoids, and Dragons: Monstrous Creatures Mediating Relationships between People and Country in Aboriginal Northern Australia

Joanne Thurman

The notion that monsters are really out there was first brought home to me in Litchfield National Park, one of the most visited national parks in the Top End of Australia.[1] In the context of my work in heritage protection in the Northern Territory, Australia, I was on a fieldwork trip with members of an Aboriginal group called the Mak Mak Marranunggu to map sacred sites inside the national park. One of these sites they themselves could not approach because of traditional protocols (for them, it would be *pulitj* [poison/dangerous] if they got too close). However, they said it was all right for me, as a non-Indigenous person, to go closer to take the GPS data we needed. As I turned to head off on my own, they warned me to "watch out for the cave men." I stopped dead in my tracks, wanting to find out exactly what I was risking before continuing. This was the beginning of what turned out to be many stories told to me by the Mak Mak Marranunggu about a number of monstrous creatures that inhabit Litchfield National Park and its surrounds.

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Monster research overwhelmingly defines monsters as fantastical beings, products of the imagination that terrorize and horrify. In Gilmore's words monsters are "imaginary, not real, embodiments of terror" (2003, 6). To the Mak Mak Marranunggu, however, monsters are real and evident everywhere and everywhen, and not all of them are terrorizing (see also Onnudottir, Chapter 11 herein). Independent of how scary (or not) these monsters are, their presence has impacts on Mak Mak Marranunggu daily activities and movement through country, and there are protocols of how to engage with or avoid different kinds of monsters.

Out of the Mak Mak Marranunggu pantheon of monsters, in this chapter I focus on three: the "cave men" I was warned about during the first field trip, also called Nugabig; paranormal light phenomena (or luminoids) called Minmin Lights; and a subterranean dragon called the Latharr-ghun. This choice is in part based on the fact that these were more frequently mentioned in conversations than any of the others and, as a result, I have more information on the Nugabig, Minmin Lights, and Latharr-ghun. Together, through their respective habitats (on the ground, in the air, and underground), these three monsters complement the argument I put forward in this chapter: that monsters are an inextricable part of the entire Mak Mak Marranunggu world. It is a world that, in the physical sense, overlaps with a national park and surrounding pastoral stations but, in an ontological sense, is separate from the world that visitors to the national park see.

In this chapter, I work toward these boundaries from the inside of the Mak Mak Marranunggu world. I begin by exploring these three Mak Mak Marranunggu monsters against definitions of what monsters, generally speaking, are thought to be. In this first section, I point to the conception of a monster as that which does not fit a particular cultural schematic: as unclassifiable and "other" and therefore representing a violation of, and threat to, an internal cultural order. Mak Mak Marranunggu monsters fit this definition with regard to their physical form, and, as explored below, in varying degrees they may also pose a physical danger when encountered. Crucially, though, they do not represent the existential threat that has been attributed to monsters elsewhere. This latter point is explored more fully in the next two sections, illustrating Mak Mak Marranunggu encounters with their monsters, interpretations of these encounters, and an exploration of Mak Mak Marranunggu/monster protocols. The key point in these sections is that the Nugabig, Minmin Lights, and Latharr-ghun can be understood as mediating the way Mak Mak Marranunggu relate to country and how they understand place and belonging. These three monsters complicate conceptualizations along binary lines, challenging attempts to understand the Mak Mak Marranunggu world in

terms of inside-human-belonging versus outside-monster-other. This becomes particularly evident when one considers that the Mak Mak Marranunggu cultural world overlaps in physical space with a national park and pastoral stations, and I investigate below how the Nugabig, Minmin Lights, and Latharr-ghun mediate the presence and entry of true strangers: other human beings.

The ethnographic data for this chapter was gathered during fieldwork trips conducted in the context of applied anthropological work for the express purpose of research under heritage protection legislation, and therefore over a shorter period than that of other contributors to the volume. Applied work does not always provide the in-depth experience of place and people that extensive long-term fieldwork provides. However, every so often, an applied job can transport me, at least a little, toward seeing the world in new ways, or, indeed, seeing a different world. This happened during work I undertook with the Mak Mak Marranunggu, and it was my burgeoning knowledge of the presence of their monsters, specifically, that helped me see country differently and to understand, experientially, the feeling of being a stranger myself. In my conclusion, I reflect on how the monsters marked this ontological separation of worlds to me, through an experience of being inside the national park and yet outside the Mak Mak Marranunggu world.

Mak Mak Marranunggu Monsters

Like elsewhere in Aboriginal Australia, the Mak Mak Marranunggu world was created during what in English is called the Dreaming (see among many others Munn 1970; Stanner 1953; and Morton, Chapter 5 herein). This refers to the time when cultural heroes, or Dreaming ancestors, through their travels, actions, and interactions with each other created and gave form to the geographic landscape and its features, including plants, animals, and humans, as well as to the laws or codes of Aboriginal culture and sociality; of how Aboriginal people relate to each other and to their respective country. Taxonomically, while Mak Mak Marranunggu distinguish between animals, plants, and humans as distinct classes, the Nugabig, Minmin Lights, and Latharr-ghun are not spoken of as animals or "ordinary" beings and neither are they considered to be Dreaming ancestors. They each seem to stand alone, outside of this classificatory schema, cross-cutting its schematic boundaries.

The Nugabig are big, tall, black, and hairy "cave men" described by Mak Mak Marranunggu as literally "like another species"; human-like, but not Aboriginal. Minmin Lights are paranormal light phenomena that often

appear high in the sky but may also move closer to the earth and hover. The appearance and behavior of these luminoids is variable: they have been reported as bright white, yellow, orange, and sometimes red lights, appearing both in the singular and multiple, moving, stationary, and often flashing and pulsating, or expanding and contracting in size. The Latharr-ghun is a big, black, scaly dragon said to live and travel in caverns and tunnels underground, and as it travels it makes a th-d-th-d-th-d sound by which people are alerted to its presence.

The Nugabig, Minmin Lights, and Latharr-ghun are, in Douglas's (1969) terms, anomalous, unclassifiable; they exist "between and in contrast to normally existing categories" (Gilmore 2003, 18). It is on these grounds that I label them monsters, following Cohen's (1996) argument that a primary criterion or characteristic of monsters is their "refusal to participate in the classificatory 'order of things'" (6; see also Carroll 1990, 34). Monsters are always morphologically anomalous: commonly unnaturally huge in size; bizarre in body or form; and often either a hybrid combination of, or more or less than, categories of classification (i.e., human, animal, plant) (Gilmore 2003, ix; 6–8; see also Musharbash, Chapter 1 herein). Considered in these terms, the Nugabig are a combination of animal and subhuman. In form they resemble a human figure, but they are considered an inferior species. Lacking in spoken language, they are too hairy—like an animal—and too large to be properly human. The Minmin Lights confound distinctions between the animate and inanimate, of a "being" as a living organism. These luminoids are inorganic and yet they appear to have self-propelled purpose and direction. Similarly, descriptions of the Latharr-ghun recall reptilian characteristics and yet its size—large enough to snag a human in its mouth—and its habitat position it beyond that classificatory schema.

Monsters' anomalous physicality, often scary to behold in itself, not least because of the perceived threat to human safety, also operates at a deeper level of peril. Being abnormal, transgressive, and unclassifiable according to a particular cultural schematic, monsters threaten the epistemological and ontological basis of that schema; by not fitting into it "they violate it" (Carroll 1990, 34), they menace its internal logics and identities (Mittman 2012; Cohen 1996). As Gilmore highlights:

> Ontologically intermediary, neither fish nor fowl, [monsters] do not fit into the mental scheme people rely on to explain the world. Being thus inexplicable, monsters are not only physically but cognitively threatening: they undermine basic understandings. By smashing distinctions, monsters offer a threat to the culture's very integrity as an intellectual whole (2003, 19).

This holds true for the creatures I am discussing in an ambiguous way, for while their physical forms are taxonomically anomalous and therefore monstrous, this does not make them dangerous in Gilmore's sense. In their physical forms and behaviors, the Nugabig, Minmin Lights, and Latharr-ghun may instill, to varying degrees, fear or nervousness; however the fact (or possibility) of their very existence does not represent a disruption or violation of the Mak Mak Marranunggu cultural world. In fact, as I explore further below, they are considered to belong, to be of country.

Moreover, the Nugabig, Minmin Lights, and Latharr-ghun operate in a different way to common understandings of monsters, such as werewolves and vampires, which are generally accepted to dwell in the imagination rather than in reality; "that which is horrible, but *does not actually exist*" (Mittman, 2012, 5, emphasis in original). Far from fantastical or imaginary, Mak Mak Marranunggu understand the Nugabig, Minmin Lights, and Latharr-ghun to be real inhabitants of the country. They constitute both a historical and contemporary quotidian co-presence, and stories about their sightings, activities, and encounters with locals in both domestic and bush settings abound. During one of my visits the story of a local Aboriginal ranger photographing a Nugabig in the bush was doing the rounds through the community, accompanied by the image itself via Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS). Unfortunately, I was unable to locate the person who took the photograph to seek permission to reproduce it here. The image, taken at dusk, showed a dark and shadowy scene of trees and bush. In front of the trees, but at enough of a distance from the photographer to appear as a silhouette only, one could make out what looked like a dark figure that appeared to be moving away into the bush.

What struck me about this image, which was shown to me as evidence of the existence of Nugabig, was the different reaction I had compared with the Mak Mak Marranunggu. For me, the remarkable thing was to contemplate the possibility that Nugabig exist; for the Mak Mak Marranunggu the actual existence of the Nugabig has never been questioned—it is merely a matter of fact. What was remarkable for them was that someone had managed to capture one on digital media. In the vein of Mittman, I would argue that whether "we believe or disbelieve the existence of a phenomenon is not what grants it social and cultural force" (2012, 6). As Mittman continues, "the monster is known through its *effect*, its impact" (emphasis in original). In other words, through considerations of how the Nugabig, Minmin Lights, and Latharr-ghun influence the lives of Mak Mak Marranunggu we can begin to understand their significance to the fabric of the Mak Mak Marranunggu world.

Monsters Marking the Mak Mak Marranunggu World

Taken most literally, the Nugabig, Minmin Lights, and Latharr-ghun inhabit the margins of the Mak Mak Marranunggu human world, dwelling in and occasionally emerging from caves, the sky, and subterranean tunnels and caverns, respectively. These monsters, however, are far from marginal with respect to their function, meaning, and significance. In their encounters and interactions with the human world, each of these monsters "tells" a different story, contributing a strand of the rich fabric out of which the Mak Mak Marranunggu world is woven. In this section I discuss each monster in turn, offering some interpretations and analysis of how they mark the Mak Mak Marranunggu world; how they might be considered as reflections or embodiments of certain histories and contemporary relationships and dangers.

The Nugabig, for example, mark conflicts over country. In the precontact days, encounters between the Nugabig and the ancestors of contemporary Mak Mak Marranunggu (called "the old people") were frequent and not peaceful. There are many stories of how the Nugabig and the old people used to engage in running fights across the country. The Nugabig were considered by the old people to be a subaltern species, in part because they lacked spoken language and the old people could only communicate with them using hand signs. At some point in time, the Nugabig were pushed to the margins of the Mak Mak Marranunggu cosmos. Today, they live in caves and face-to-face encounters, communication, or clashes with Mak Mak Marranunggu have ceased. There are, however, still stories of sightings of the Nugabig (as above) as well as some "almost" encounters between Nugabig and Mak Mak Marranunggu, where the presence of a Nugabig is recognized by a low growl.

The Nugabigs' marginalized yet persisting existence is an uncanny presence, reminiscent of both Australia's history of territorial conflicts and colonization, and of the contemporary struggles of the Mak Mak Marranunggu, who do not want to be silenced on issues to do with country. While the Nugabig have moved into the shadows and caves, they emerge every so often as reminders of former battles, victories, and threats. As well, they are symbolic of a process of internal displacement or marginalization that Mak Mak Marranunggu see themselves as struggling against. Physically, or spatially, the Mak Mak Marranunggu world is now encapsulated by a national park and surrounding pastoral leases, the management and development of which present the Mak Mak Marranunggu with new opponents to battle over what they consider their country, particularly with regard to the protection of sacred places from the ever increasing numbers of visitors every year. In this context, Mak Mak Marranunggu

struggle not to meet the same fate as the Nugabig, pushed to the margins of what is now a highly contested landscape that is perceived, experienced, and lived in very differently by a wide range of other interest groups and stakeholders, including other Aboriginal groups also claiming traditional ownership. Where tourists see swimming holes, national park managers see the need for resorts and facilities, pastoralists see cattle grazing country, and the government, the need for infrastructural development, the Mak Mak Marranunggu see sacred sites associated with Dreaming ancestors and a country to which only particular people and creatures—including monsters—belong.

Mak Mak Marranunggu are sensitive to the presence of outsiders, and their monsters often play a role in identifying those who do not belong. Minmin Lights, for example, actively alert Mak Mak Marranunggu to the presence of strangers approaching their world. They act as a kind of signal that follow visitors' cars approaching Mak Mak Marranunggu country, or by appearing at the presence of visitors to hover nearby or above them. Other sightings of Minmin Lights can best be described as visits. For example, an entire swarm of Minmin Lights appeared out the back of a Mak Mak Marranunggu woman's house, where she was able to stand and watch them as they hovered for a while before they eventually disappeared. Similarly, a single Minmin Light was sighted near the driveway entrance of the homestead of a Mak Mak Marranunggu man. It was bobbing up and down, illuminating the station sign on every downward oscillation. Calling out to the luminoid in his native language the man said he introduced himself, and then asked, "Who are you? Where you from? Come here." At this, the light came closer and then sat bobbing up and down again, this time expanding and contracting in size, "small like a baseball and then really big." When I asked him if he had been scared at the time he kind of laughed and said, "I thought 'what the fuck do I do now?' when it came closer." He kept talking to it in language as it sat there bobbing. Eventually the luminoid went back to the sign and bobbed there again before disappearing. Minmin Lights are, one could say, visitors themselves, but familiar visitors who mark strangers to Mak Mak Marranunggu.

The Latharr-ghun is also able to distinguish between those who belong and those who are strangers to country. It is said that from its subterranean habitat the Latharr-ghun can smell people on the ground above—through their sweat—and will follow them. Sweat and its individually distinctive smell, across Aboriginal Australia, is significant in mediating the relationship between Aboriginal people, their country, and the Dreaming (see among others McDonald 2010; Merlan 1998; Povinelli 1993; and Strang 2002). Their forbears told the Mak Mak Marranunggu that Latharr-ghun can emerge from the ground through soft spots in the soil. They were

advised that, should they hear a Latharr-ghun, they should stand very still and, while calling out to country in language, take the sweat from under their arms and throw it out "so it can smell you're from that country; you belong." The Latharr-ghun lives, literally, underneath the Mak Mak Marranunggu, and the old people knew how to relate to it, how to calm it, by letting it know they were of the same country.

Today, the Latharr-ghun ambiguously marks Mak Mak Marranunggu confidence in battling and conquering threats to their connection with the old people; it can affirm it or point out the perils in losing it. For example, following the death of a senior elder a young man had a dream about a Latharr-ghun emerging from the swampy ground at the base of a hill during flood time. It emerged near the elder's funeral platform and threatened destruction.[2] In his dream the young man fought and ultimately slew the Latharr-ghun, protecting the sanctity of the elder's burial area and, symbolically, the maintenance of cultural protocols related to proper burial. But there are also stories like the following two. One man told me that he was out in the bush doing some fencing work when he heard the th-d-th-d-th-d sound, so he stopped and threw his sweat. Having done that, though, he grabbed his tools and hastened away from the area. Similarly, one of the women heard it when she was a young girl out hunting with her mother; they quickly collected their belongings and ran away from the rumbling. The Latharr-ghun thus signals kinship between monster, country, and Mak Mak Marranunggu, sensuously vouched for by the smell of the sweat of the people of the country. It also highlights a sense of change: there is less confidence in dealing with Latharr-ghun today, the relationship to which is mediated through "what the old people told us" more so than confidence in knowing how to deal with a dragon, should it emerge from the soft sand.

When monsters emerge from the fringes of the human world—from the shadows, caves, and crypts—this is commonly said to represent a disruption to the normal order; the world is put right again only when they return to their (separate) domain. Monsters and the margins they inhabit are often analyzed as representing the borders of particular cultural and social spaces; as symbolizing both that which does not belong internally, as well as the dangers that lie beyond, demarcated as "wilderness, as noncultural space, as unexplored territory" (Gilmore 2003, 192; Manning, Chapter 10). In the instances cited here, this analysis does not hold fully. Emergence of the Nugabig, Minmin Lights, and Latharr-ghun disrupt the normal order mildly, if at all, by reminding Mak Mak Marranunggu of the past, their relation to country, and the presence of strangers. More importantly, I suggest, the presence of the Nugabig, Minmin Lights, and Latharr-ghun and that of a host of other creatures or phenomena can be understood

as permeating the Mak Mak Marranunggu world. They play a vital role—mediate, even—the way Mak Mak Marranunggu relate to and move through country, how they understand place and belonging, themselves and their relationship to their world. This is further underscored through the quotidian and socioculturally specific ways in which Mak Mak Marranunggu relate to their monsters.

Mak Mak Marranunggu Monster Protocols

Relative to the degree of physical threat they pose, the Nugabig, Minmin Lights, and Latharr-ghun regulate or limit the movement of Mak Mak Marranunggu through country. In this regard, there is some ambiguity as to whether the Nugabig pose a danger to Mak Mak Marranunggu: they are sometimes spoken of with fear and warning and at other times referred to as "poor things," vegetarian "cave men," who survive on sugarbag (a local term for honey), nuts, and the like. Generally, though, on hearing a Nugabig's low growl Mak Mak Marranunggu will beat a rapid and sometimes screaming retreat to safety. Comparatively, Minmin Lights are the least dangerous; at best they are spoken about with wonder and fascination, at worst with a hint of consternation or apprehension. However, this seems to be caused by the uncertainty about what they are rather than any expectation that they will cause harm. The Latharr-ghun are the least benign of the three monsters presented here. Although they know who belongs to the country by their sweat, this may not guarantee a person's safety. Should one of these dragons emerge from a soft spot in the soil, it may take you back down with it.

Mak Mak Marranunggu speak about their own presence and movement in country in terms of listening, looking, feeling, and speaking to country. They are always on alert for the potential presence of any one creature, which, if detected, may initiate certain cultural protocols or the complete cessation of activity and a retreat to safer ground. These protocols extend to all monsters but to list just a few further examples: the cry of the Kulpurrum—a truly malevolent shape-shifting monster that, if it catches you, will "smash you over the nose, peel that over and suck your blood and your brain and everything"—initiates instant retreat. The same happens when Mak Mak Marranunggu recognize that the call of a white cockatoo is singing out a warning that a Featherfoot is approaching (see also Musharbash, Chapter 3; and Eickelkamp, Chapter 4). Or, similarly, when they recognize that a Mana-man-mari, a short, stumpy, ape-like creature with a human face, is signaling the presence of strangers on country. Mana-man-mari will often try to make strangers leave by throwing pebbles or

clicking rocks or sticks together and making them feel uncomfortable and "watched." With its myriad of creatures—some malevolent and dangerous—part of survival for the Mak Mak Marranunggu involves being able to understand when they are being "talked to" by the country, being able to read the signs, and adjust their movements and actions accordingly.

This knowledge of country (knowing where to look, what to look for, the meaning of sounds and smells, and how to act, behave, and move) marks their belonging. This is brought home to both Mak Mak Marranunggu themselves as well as to their visitors. The Mak Mak Marranunggu make a clear distinction between those humans who are "of the country" and those who are strangers; those bodies the country and its creatures know and those who are not known and therefore do not belong. The presence of the latter is mediated, also, through monster protocols.

For example, the Minmin Lights are perceived by the Mak Mak Marranunggu as assisting them in identifying and mediating the presence of strangers on country. One such case occurred when a group of Aboriginal men from elsewhere were visiting the Mak Mak Marranunggu for some pastoral training and Minmin Lights appeared. Everyone retreated back to the homestead. People said these men were marked as strangers by the luminoids, which had appeared because the Mak Mak Marranunggu had failed to perform a ceremony of introduction called *tjuk-piya*. Being on country with Mak Mak Marranunggu was not enough: the presence of the Minmin Lights indicated that the visitors had to be introduced to country properly (see also Alimardanian, Chapter 6). This involves spraying water on the visitor's head, underarms, and belly button, while singing out in language to introduce them to the country or, minimally, taking sweat from Mak Mak Marranunggu bodies and rubbing it down the visitor. Without the ceremony, it was feared, the Minmin Lights would follow the visitors throughout the training. Similarly, Mak Mak Marranunggu can protect strangers on country by throwing sweat and identifying themselves in language, should they hear the growl of the Latharr-ghun (although, as per above, warning the strangers to run may be safer still).

In Cohen's (1996) sense, then, these monsters can be analyzed as marking the borders of a cultural world, but it is not the monsters that are considered cultural outsiders. The Nugabig, Minmin Lights, and Latharr-ghun are known by the Mak Mak Marranunggu and, I would argue, are not "other" but integral to their cultural world: they are of country. These monsters illustrate that a Mak Mak Marranunggu sense of identity and belonging is an embodied one. Mak Mak Marranunggu interact with country and are "known" by country and its many creatures in a literal sense; the country recognizes them by the breath of spoken language and the fluids and scents of their bodies. And through the same, spoken

language and their sweat rubbed over others, Mak Mak Marranunggu are able to mediate and authorize the legitimacy of a stranger's presence on country. A key point is that Mak Mak Marranunggu know the signs and only in their presence are their visitors safe, which demonstrates to both themselves and their visitors the interconnectedness between Mak Mak Marranunggu and the country.

Conclusion

Monsters are often identified by a characteristic of interstitiality (among many others, see Asma 2009; Carroll 1990; Cohen 1996; Mittman 2012), which can refer to both where monsters dwell and their physical form. Monsters transgress social and cultural boundaries and defy cultural schematics and categorizations, a characteristic that makes them inherently dangerous. Monsters are, accordingly, often analyzed in terms of their "otherness"; as representing that which does not belong, and therefore marking particular cultural, social, and political boundaries.

As I have demonstrated, the Nugabig, Minmin Lights, and Latharr-ghun fit ambiguously with this analysis. On the one hand, they can be considered as "other" to the Mak Mak Marranunggu cultural world. Each stands alone and outside of a classificatory schema that taxonomically distinguishes between animals, plants, humans, and Dreaming ancestors. Moreover, they inhabit the physical margins of the human world, dwelling in and emerging from rock caves, the sky, and subterranean caverns, respectively. And relative to the degree of bodily threat they pose, they regulate or limit the movement of Mak Mak Marranunggu through country, who are always on alert to their potential presence and ready to respond appropriately.

On the other hand, even though the Nugabig, Minmin Lights, and Latharr-ghun dwell at the margins of human space and do not fit into categorical schematics, this does not mean they do not belong or are "other." Rather than being marginal and separate, these monsters infuse the Mak Mak Marranunggu world with cohesive meaning, underscored by the roles they play in encounters with human strangers, those who do not belong in the true sense. In fact, Mak Mak Marranunggu monsters play a vital role in demarcating the limits of those who belong and those who do not.[3] Minmin Lights and Latharr-ghun, for example, can identify a stranger's body through their sweat; similarly, these monsters prompt the upkeep of traditional practices related to Mak Mak Marranunggu identifying themselves to country through traditional rituals. Despite their classificatory distinctiveness or "otherness," the Nugabig, Minmin Lights,

and Latharr-ghun do not represent a disruption to the natural order; they are sentient beings of the country, of which the Mak Mak Marranunggu understand themselves to be a part, and through which they understand, articulate, and enact their sense of belonging. Their monsters mark the Mak Mak Marranunggu world to themselves and to their visitors.

However, the Mak Mak Marranunggu monsters, through absence, also mark a different world, revealed by considering the difference between visiting the Mak Mak Marranunggu and visiting Litchfield National Park. Tourists coming to the national park do not know about the Mak Mak Marranunggu, nor about their monsters. Even though the national park and the Mak Mak Marranunggu world spatially overlap, visitors to the park are in and of a different world. This ontological power of Mak Mak Marranunggu monsters emerged on a hot and humid day when, following a meeting with the Mak Mak Marranunggu, I decided to stop at one of the water holes for a swim.

Florence Falls is a popular spot for tourists and on that day it was extremely busy. Following the path a fair way down through the jungle I arrived at a good-sized swimming hole, about half of which is encircled by steep rocky cliffs over which the falls cascade. The deepest water is at the base of these cliffs and there was a group of young people climbing part way up in order to jump, with shouts and whoops, back into the water. I entered the water hole at the shallow, rocky end and after a short paddle sat on a rock toward the edge and took in the scene. Like me, all the other tourists were gathered around the shallower end, paddling or sitting on submerged rocks. The effect was that as a group we formed a kind of audience, sitting in a semicircle around the shallower edges of the water hole. I looked around and realized we were all facing in the same direction; all heads were turned toward the deeper end, attention toward the jumpers and the noise they were making. As I sat there I became physically aware of the space behind me; I felt my back go very cold and I experienced the prickly sensation of hairs rising at the back of my neck. I turned to look and at first I saw only the outside ring of vegetation that bordered the water hole, but gradually my perspective shifted and I saw deeper into the bush itself, not only the trees and plants but also the shadows and depths. I started thinking about the stories that the Mak Mak Marranunggu had told me only a couple of hours earlier and the bush took on a different dimension, a different atmosphere and character. I felt watched. I realized just how profound a stranger I was in that country, how acutely I did not belong. I felt the incongruence between the Mak Mak Marranunggu cultural world that I had been given a brief insight into and that of the tourists and the way they inhabited—indeed dominated—that space. And as I left, I wondered about the mermaids I had been told about, with

prawn tails and razor sharp teeth that inhabit many of these traditionally women's only water holes, who have been credited by the Mak Mak Marranunggu for the number of, mostly male, tourists drowning.

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Notes

1. It has close to a third of a million visitors, annually. For more details on visitor numbers in Northern Territory National Parks refer to http://parksandwildlife.nt.gov.au/manage/visitor#.UtHYMMUiPrc [accessed 10.1.2014].
2. Dreams in Aboriginal Australia are taken to be a vital connection between humans and the realm of the Dreaming and are interpreted collectively (for some examples of these processes see Dussart 2000; Glaskin 2005; Poirier 2005).
3. An interesting analogous interpretation can be found in Saethre's (2007) paper on Warlpiri understandings of their relationship to aliens: "When asked to explain why non-Aboriginal people were invariably the victims of [alien] abductions, I was told that the aliens were able to recognize Aboriginal people as belonging in the area. David stated that *yapa*, a word that refers to both Warlpiri and other Aboriginal people, were not abducted because, 'They know us. This is our land'" (909).

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Chapter 3

Monstrous Transformations: A Case Study from Central Australia

Yasmine Musharbash

My chapter is ethnographically situated in the Tanami Desert, the home of Warlpiri people and the monsters that haunt, terrorize, and sometimes kill them. Located to the northwest of the center of Australia, first contact came relatively late in this region, and over the past century the Tanami and its human and monstrous inhabitants have experienced dramatic and tumultuous changes. I explore how one particular monster, called Kurdaitcha or Jarnpa, transformed with these changes, and the meanings that flow from this reality.[1]

The hauntees of this monster, Warlpiri people, formerly nomadic hunter gatherers, were sedentized in the mid-1940s in government ration depots fringing the Tanami, set up by colonial patrol officers in response to the effects of frontier violence and a severe drought. Over the ensuing decades, these settlements have grown into typically neocolonial towns. Residents still speak Warlpiri as their first language, for example, and have retained or adapted many of their customs. Simultaneously, they are intimately entangled in the neoliberal world, accessing Australian infrastructure, having bank accounts, being exposed to ever-increasing levels of governance, and so forth (Musharbash 2007; 2008). A clear consequence of these cataclysmic upheavals is that contemporary Warlpiri lives are dramatically different compared to pre-contact times; another is that they also differ from the lives of non-Indigenous Australians. This second disparity is statistically exemplified through what in Australia is called "The Gap": a drastic differential in measurable inequality between

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Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, from life expectancy and mortality rates, to literacy rates, incarceration rates, unemployment rates, and so forth.[2] For the purposes of this chapter, out of these, I single out contemporary mortality rates, which result in a difference of roughly twenty years in life expectancy between Warlpiri and non-Indigenous people. My chapter investigates how we can approximate Warlpiri understandings of these processes through exploring the transformations of the monsters that haunt them.

I contextualize this exploration within the understanding—prominent in monster studies—that as human society changes, so do its monsters (see among many others, Asma 2009; Campbell [1948] 1968; Carroll 1990; Poole 2011). "There are monsters on the prowl," writes Michel Foucault (1972, 224), "whose form changes with the history of knowledge." And, adds Richard Kearney (2003, 4): "For as our ideas of self-identity alter so do our ideas of what menaces this identity." I approach these matters, specifically, by exploring the relevance to the Tanami case of two different paths of monstrous adaptation suggested in the literature: one that sees one type of monster supplanted by another as the world and, with it, understandings of the self and knowledge changes; and the other, which sees the monster changing with the world (see also Chapter 1 herein).

My investigation is ethnographic in nature, but I draw on data from two different periods to allow for historical comparison. For the ethnographic portrait of the monsters active during pre- and early contact times, I rely extensively on Mervyn J. Meggitt's (1955) meticulous documentation of Jarnpa. This is based on data he collected between 1953 and 1954, when he worked for ten months with Warlpiri people at the newly established government ration station of Lajamanu. I compare and contrast Meggitt's data with my own, gathered over the past twenty years, while working with Warlpiri people at Yuendumu.

I begin by delineating some critical terminological issues, sketching that Jarnpa appear to be merging with Kurdaitcha. This is followed by ethnographic portraits of Jarnpa at Lajamanu in the 1950s, and Jarnpa/Kurdaitcha and Kurdaitcha at Yuendumu since 1994. Next, I explore how and why Warlpiri people fear Jarnpa/Kurdaitcha and then analyze transformations of Jarnpa/Kurdaitcha by drawing on the two models of monstrous transformation suggested in monster studies, proposing that merging the two monstrous figures allows for a more human-*like* monster, which in turn enables it to keep up with the changes its human victims are experiencing. I conclude by tying together traditional and contemporary Warlpiri fears, historical developments in the Tanami, and the ways in which Jarnpa/Kurdaitcha managed to transform in such a way that they can continue to haunt, terrorize, and kill Warlpiri people.

Kurdaitcha and Jarnpa: A Terminological Muddle that Makes Perfect Sense

The reason I used both terms, Kurdaitcha and Jarnpa, in the introduction is that the monsters' names are in flux. During Meggit's time they seem to have been exclusively called Jarnpa (he spells it *djanba*), while at the beginning of my research the terms were used interchangeably, and today the term Kurdaitcha is much more commonly used.

According to Meggitt, Jarnpa have "many human qualities and frailties," but really are "malicious, indeed malevolent beings, who on occasions seem to be wholly immaterial and to possess miraculous powers" (Meggitt 1955, 378). Kurdaitcha, on the other hand, are *human*. The term Kurdaitcha, and its English version "Featherfeet," are used widely across Aboriginal Australia (see also Thurman, Chapter 2 and Eickelkamp, Chapter 4 herein) to refer to actual people who, under cover of night, and equipped with emu feather-shoes and their sorcery skills, sneak up on their victims and kill them to avenge the death of someone close to them. An early and quite extensive description of Kurdaitcha revenge parties, how they are organized, how they proceed, who is (said to be) among them, and so forth, is provided by Spencer and Gillen (1927, 454–61).[3] Elkin ([1938] 1979, 313), in turn, deftly sums up matters by stating that the "term *kadaitja* refers first to the shoe which is made of marsupial fur string and emu feathers, and secondly to the men who perform magic while wearing them." (The significance of the feathershoes lies in veiling the identity of the person wearing them as central Australian Aboriginal people easily identify individuals by their foot tracks.)

It is of crucial importance to note that the beings that Warlpiri people call Kurdaitcha are—most of the time—quite different from the human Kurdaitcha revenge killers known elsewhere in Aboriginal Australia.[4] In fact, the Warlpiri dictionary (Laughren, et al. n.d., unpaginated) has no entry for Kurdaitcha but uses it as the English translation for entries that contain Jarnpa; put differently, for Warlpiri people, Kurdaitcha and Jarnpa are synonymous and used to describe monsters, not humans. Unless, of course, they refer to an actual Kurdaitcha revenge party coming from elsewhere to Warlpiri country. The productivity of this terminological muddle is illustrated in my very first encounter in the field with Jarnpa/Kurdaitcha:

> It was 1994, and I had never even heard either term. I was a masters student undertaking my first fieldwork at Yuendumu, and accompanying my adoptive fieldwork parents, Joy and Old Man, and the children and grandchildren they were looking after, to Yujarlinpa outstation for the Yuendumu School's annual country visit.[5] (For a week each year, kids used to be taught in family groups, on country, by their elders, instead of being taught in age

> groups in classrooms by teachers.) Other families came to Yujarlinpa as well, and they and five non-Indigenous teachers, camped at Yujarlinpa outstation itself, next to the windmill and the little houses. Our little group camped a couple of hundred meters away along the road leading to the outstation. I didn't understand why we were not camping with the others, and my questions were answered with shrugs. The first night in camp, after an excursion to some sacred sites in the vicinity, then digging for yams, and a huge dinner, I fell asleep early, exhausted. Only to be awoken, not much later, by Joy yelling at the top of her voice, sounding scared, angry, and upset all at once. At first I thought she must have been fighting with someone camping at the outstation, and that she was hurling abuse at them, justifying herself, and cursing them. This would also have explained why we were camping on the fringes of the outstation. As I woke up properly and got my bearings I realised, however, that she was not yelling towards the outstation but in a different direction, into the night. Everybody else in our little breakaway camp was huddled together, under the blankets, pretending to be asleep. I tried to ask the girl next to me what was going on; "Shhhhhhhh" she replied, and quietly whispered, "Kurdaitcha." This meant nothing to me, and was just one more puzzle during the all too confusing first weeks of fieldwork, where I understood little of what was going on around me. Frustrated, I drifted back into sleep, only to be awoken again as Joy resumed her screeched litany, a pattern that continued throughout the night. She would yell and yell, and then, when she was finally quiet and I was about to fall asleep, I'd hear a bird call and she'd be off again, screaming at what I then thought was the night.

Much later, I realized Joy had not shrieked at the night but, as the girl tried to tell me, at *something* or *someone* out there in the night. Since that first experience, I have spent many a night at Yuendumu awake because our camp was assaulted by Kurdaitcha; and on numerous occasions I joined others in packing up and leaving because Kurdaitcha were about. I have witnessed Kurdaitcha attacking individual camps and I once experienced a two-week period when Kurdaitcha were simply everywhere in Yuendumu.

In retrospect, I understand that Joy's fear was triggered by two separate things: the chirping of that bird—to Warlpiri people, a clear indicator of Kurdaitcha presence—and the danger (that I knew nothing about) that we were in, signified by the position of our little breakaway camp. What I did not know then was that this had been the first time this particular family had returned to Yujarlinpa after Old Man's adopted son, and owner of that outstation, had passed away, and that some people held Old Man responsible for his death. The reason we were not camping with the others was because Old Man and Joy had not yet performed the ceremonies that would clear the outstation for them. Meanwhile, camping further out bush, we were exposed to prowling monsters who haunt, ensorcell, and oftentimes kill, Warlpiri people.

Both Jarnpa and human Kurdaitcha revenge parties have companion birds who announce their presence to Warlpiri people versed in reading these signs. What was out there, Joy feared, had come to get us. What *or* who exactly it was is not clear. Did the girl, when she whispered, "Shhhhhhhh, Kurdaitcha," refer to an actual traditional executioner from over east or down south, specifically after Old Man and his family in order to avenge the death of Old Man's adopted son? Or, did she mean that a monster had chanced upon us as we were sleeping defenseless and away from the others? I propose that this is not the relevant question. Rather, it seems to me that the terminological muddle indicates the two *terms* have merged (Warlpiri people now calling Jarnpa Kurdaitcha). Moreover, I propose, and substantiate below through a comparison between traditional Jarnpa and contemporary Kurdaitcha, that the ethnographic data substantiates the two *figures* are merging: Jarnpa and Kurdaitcha becoming one, the monstrous being taking on more human qualities, the human being taking on more monstrous ones.

Traditional Jarnpa

My description of Jarnpa at the time of sedentization is based on data contained in Meggitt's (1955) excellent treatise on Jarnpa. Like their human Kurdaitcha counterparts, Jarnpa have companion birds, wear feathershoes, and kill people. They look like humans, but "wild," with skin darker than that of Warlpiri people and their bodies covered in red ochre; they have red eyes and matted hair standing on end. They are left-handed. All Jarnpa are male and have huge penises, always partially erect. Their language sounds like whistling, but they can also speak Warlpiri. To most humans they are invisible; however, *ngankari* (medicine men) can see them. As can dogs, who often warn Warlpiri about the presence of Jarnpa, and may also attack and sometimes defeat them.

Jarnpa have their own homes, where they keep their (abducted) human wives (their offspring is always male and Jarnpa). However, they are extremely mobile and leave their homes every morning to hunt. Their mobility is enhanced by their ability to fly "as fast as a bullet" (Meggitt 1955, 383). This, combined with their invisibility, allows them to steal, rape, and kill without being seen. Most Jarnpa hunt (and haunt) on their own, but sometimes they come in packs. They have a break during the midday heat and then:

> Setting off again in the cool of the afternoon, the *djanba* first hunts animals for food, then looks about for human victims. He rapes any lone woman he meets, then kills her either by twisting her head back over her shoulder, or

> by forcing her mouth open and thrusting his *jara* [sorcery] bag down her throat . . . The *djanba* is not a cannibal; rather, he kills for the sheer pleasure it gives him. (Meggitt 1955, 386, note that I omitted some vernacular terms from the original)

This passage is followed by elaborations on the various ways in which Jarnpa kill humans. Their magic is the same as the one that human sorcerers, including Kurdaitcha, commonly use across Aboriginal Australia. Key features include small bags made of hair string that contain curses, and the practice of "singing" the victim. The effects are that at first the victim can still walk around, albeit in a zombie-like manner, and usually will die within three days, unless successfully treated by a *ngankari*. Just as often they use brute force, choking or twisting the necks of their victims. Meggitt describes one such case:

> I was told, how one morning, a couple of years ago a . . . man was found lying dead in his camp at Yuendumu. Nobody had heard anything unusual during the night; and the local medicine men had diagnosed it as a case of neck-twisting by a *djanba*. (1955, 389)

In opposition to human Kurdaitcha, Jarnpa never kill for revenge, and as opposed to Mamu (see Eickelkamp, Chapter 4 and Morton, Chapter 5 herein), they are not cannibals. There is no explanation beyond their monstrous lust to kill; as Meggitt said, Jarnpa kill for the "sheer pleasure" it gives them.

This proclivity of Jarnpa to kill while unseen offered Warlpiri people, who do not believe in natural death (except in the case of very young or very old people), a set of logical explanations for otherwise inexplicable deaths. The deceased had the bad luck of a chance encounter with a Jarnpa who used sorcery, which, unless countered by a *ngankari*, manifests as an incurable sickness leading to death, or brute force leading to a sudden unfathomable death. Jarnpa were responsible for random deaths that could not be explained. This, above everything else, indicates why "after nightfall the Walbiri fear of them [Jarnpa] is quite apparent" (Meggitt 1955, 378).

The term monster, as Kearney (2003, 5) and Musharbash (Chapter 1 herein) explain, pairs the meanings of "to show" and "to warn." The presence of monsters augurs "something" about the world and about the state of things. What exactly that "something" is changes over time, just as the shape, activities, and indeed the name of Jarnpa have changed. While there are significant discrepancies between Meggitt's descriptions of Jarnpa at Lajamanu, four years after it was set up as a government ration station, and those of Kurdaitcha I collected some fifty years later at Yuendumu, some things have remained the same.

Contemporary Kurdaitcha

I begin my ethnographic portrait of contemporary Kurdaitcha by presenting some extracts from field notes I took during research at Yuendumu between 1998 and 2005. During this period, I was studying everyday domestic life, sleep, and boredom, and—importantly—had no interest in monsters. Yet references to monsters, including a multitude of notes about Kurdaitcha (and Jarnpa), can be found in all of my notebooks. These extracts illustrate just how quotidian the presence of Kurdaitcha had become during my fieldwork and contain important pointers as to how Kurdaitcha transformed and continued to adjust to settlement life, which itself was undergoing significant social, cultural, political, and economic transformations. Examples include:

1. Need to drive this massive detour every time I drop S off home because a Kurdaitcha man lives in one of the empty tin houses just south of hers (nobody can see him, except for Kardiya [non-Indigenous people], whom he frequently asks for smokes).
2. I was tired but first I gave N a lift, he wanted to pick up his torch and didn't want to walk there, because then he would have to walk past the Kurdaitcha tree.
3. Was woken up in the middle of deep sleep, unsure by whom and why and how. All of a sudden I was sitting upright in my swag and saw a face right in front of me. My first thought was "Kurdaitcha" then fear kicked in. As I became more awake and clearer, I thought, maybe some drunks had come to the camp, but then I realized it was S, who needed help with the car.
4. Had a flat tire on the way back, close to the church on the bitumen, thankfully not earlier: we drove the last bit in the dark and P always is so scared of the Kurdaitcha on the road to Nyirripi [another Warlpiri community].
5. The women were singing for K and massaged her with fat, which enters the body through the navel and makes you strong again. Same as T and her sisters did for N, who had been ensorcelled by a Kurdaitcha, which was the first thing that finally helped her, even the witchdoctors she consulted before couldn't help. After T-mob sang for K, she slept calmly and deeply for the first time in a long while; they got clothes and blankets for the service.
6. Everyone headed to the southwest, where B [4 years old] saw two Kurdaitcha men, they tried to wave him over, and everyone believes they are after T's sick daughter-in-law.

7. At evening story time in the camp everyone was talking about the white woman working for X Organization, who saw a man from Western Australia at the roadhouse and asked him if he wanted a lift, he said "no" and—pop—he was gone. Everybody pretty spooked.
8. B [17 years old] was telling stories about Jarnpa, and how they can appear as kangaroo and then turn into people, and how there are lots of them at the airstrip, they come to paralyze people, like that time, when M was sick. That is what happened.
9. N [20 years old] was telling stories about Kurdaitcha and how they always stay at Lake Sarah Hotel. They have shoes [feathershoes] to make themselves invisible, and songs to make their cars invisible. They travel around, specifically, around business time [initiations], to look for women.

While formerly, according to Meggitt, Jarnpa, who had dedicated home sites, were more sedentary than Warlpiri people, they now seem to flock to settlements such as Yuendumu, Lajamanu, and Nyirripi and the region's service center, Alice Springs. For example, they are known to frequent a particular wooded area along the road between Yuendumu and Nyirripi, to live next to a particular tree on the outskirts of Yuendumu, or in a deserted house in Yuendumu's West Camp. No matter where they are, they tend to stick to the margins, skulking just beyond the circle of firelight, in the shadows, behind trees, around corners. Like so many other monsters, they lurk in the shadows, literally and figuratively. As Kearney puts it, monsters "ghost the margins of what can be legitimately thought and said" (2003, 4). And at night, because of the presence of Kurdaitcha, Yuendumu resembles one of those medieval maps; the familiar houses and roads, knowable and in place, are surrounded by literal darkness: "here be monsters."

Not only have Kurdaitcha changed their residential habits, they also modified their visibility. In the old days, as Meggitt (1955) reports, *ngankari* and dogs were the only ones able to see Jarnpa and their invisibility was due to either their headdresses or their speed. This has drastically changed. Contemporary Kurdaitcha have no need for invisibility accessories; they are intrinsically invisible to most Warlpiri people, who just can't see them. However, next to the medicine men (and women), two more categories of Warlpiri people today are able to see Kurdaitcha: children and mad people. I witnessed many a Kurdaitcha sighting like the one detailed in my field note extract 6, where a child reported seeing one or more Kurdaitcha and everybody sprang into action. The most prolonged Kurdaitcha haunting that happened while I was at Yuendumu was mediated by a teenage girl, who had what in clinical terms could be described as

a schizophrenic episode. She first reported being followed and harassed by Kurdaitcha at an outstation a two-hour drive away from Yuendumu. As the Kurdaitcha assaulted her persistently, everybody at the outstation became frightened and collectively moved back to Yuendumu where, in turn, over the next few days, something like a mass panic unfolded. The young girl was persistently guarded by senior people knowledgeable in such matters, who tried to defend her from the Kurdaitcha only she could see. At some point, while being assaulted in broad daylight near the basketball courts, she described their locations to the people around her, and one of the senior women hit one (invisible) Kurdaitcha on the bum! While that particular occurrence caused great hilarity, over the next few days the Kurdaitcha started harassing others as well, and nobody felt safe. In the end, a group of senior women took the young girl on a pilgrimage to another, far away, Aboriginal community with strong medicine men *and* well known for Christian healing miracles. The Kurdaitcha plague ceased after their departure.

It is perhaps not that surprising that in addition to *ngankari*, mad people and children can see Kurdaitcha. What those three have in common, after all, is that they are known to be able to see things that ordinary people cannot. Much more puzzling is that non-Indigenous people also can, and often do, see Kurdaitcha. As a matter of fact, many Kurdaitcha haunts are known to Warlpiri people through information provided by non-Indigenous people. For example, people knew there was a Kurdaitcha living in one of the deserted West Camp houses *because* many non-Indigenous persons had mentioned being asked for cigarettes by what they took to be an Aboriginal man there. Warlpiri people knew that no person lived there. In this, as in other Kurdaitcha sightings by non-Indigenous people, at the airstrip, the roadhouse, in Alice Springs, the non-Indigenous person is not actually aware they met a Kurdaitcha. They mistake the monster for an Aboriginal person with whom they are not familiar, someone from somewhere else. A number of insights can be deduced from these common and formulaic encounters. Firstly, that Kurdaitcha today also speak English, as they converse fluently with the non-Indigenous persons they meet. Secondly, that Kurdaitcha, who strike mortal fear in Warlpiri people, do not appear the least bit scary to non-Indigenous people. And thirdly, the casual tone of Kurdaitcha engagements with non-Indigenous people—asking for a smoke, talking about the weather, the state of the roads, or the whereabouts of Warlpiri individuals—suggests that Kurdaitcha, who kill "for sheer pleasure," do not kill just anybody, but Warlpiri people specifically.

Kurdaitcha have adapted to the contemporary neocolonial world; they speak English and they are *au fait* with twenty-first-century amenities and

services. In the old days, Jarnpa used to fly, not like birds, but fast "like a bullet." Today, they also drive Toyotas, albeit black ones (the color is significant in the central Australian context, where the white Toyotas of government agencies are so ubiquitous that in some contexts "white Toyota" is synonymous with government). When in Alice Springs, Kurdaitcha stay in hotels. One such establishment, Lake Sarah Hotel, used to be patronized by Warlpiri people until, more than six years ago, a non-Indigenous person reported what was interpreted as a Kurdaitcha sighting. Ever since then, Warlpiri people have assiduously avoided staying there. There are suspicions, and it would hardly be surprising, that Kurdaitcha are computer-literate. One morning, as I was scrolling through Facebook, a post by a Warlpiri friend of mine popped up. "Do Kurdaitcha ever sleep?" she asked the Facebook world, clearly both exhausted and exasperated after yet another night without sleep because of them. Before I could take a screenshot, she had removed the post, anxious, in case Kurdaitcha are on Facebook themselves, and not wanting to give them any more reason to terrorize her and her family.

Warlpiri Fears, Kurdaitcha, and Death

Warlpiri people continually impress me by their fearlessness, and at first I was surprised by the seemingly inordinate fear that was palpable every time Kurdaitcha were said to be around. Before delving further into the reasons underlying this pointed fear, it is imperative to note that Warlpiri people are not indiscriminately afraid of anything that *could* be a Kurdaitcha, as the following two examples attest:

1. One of the girls told me the following story about one of the houses they used to live in: "that house," she said, "is full of stories. One time, only myself and Lachlan [4 years old at the time] were there, Lachlan was scared and when the others came home they asked him what was wrong. 'Kuku jiliwirri-jarri' [a monster is causing mischief] he said, and my grandmother lit a candle, to walk into the dark room where he said the monster was. She was walking in there and said: 'Stop scaring the kids, go away!' But as she entered the room a wind came and blew out her candle. She jumped back really frightened and we all laughed. Oh, we laughed so hard."
2. One time, a large group of us, four Toyota-loads full, went on a three-day trip to visit some sacred sites. The drivers were non-Indigenous, everybody else was Warlpiri. At night, we camped in a dry creek bed.

> I slept with the Warlpiri women and children in a row as is Warlpiri custom, and the Warlpiri men slept in a row to our east. The others, one woman and two men, slept higgledy-piggledy around a fire somewhat off to the side. In the middle of the night, I was woken up by the women around me whispering frantically. They were pointing at a red figure, sitting on a rocky bolder in the distance, bathed in moonlight. "Might be Kurdaitcha," one of the women suggested. To which two others hissed, "Don't be stupid! Check the whitefellas first." And true enough, it ended up being the non-Indigenous woman, wearing a red T-shirt, who had woken up and walked to the bolder to "sit on my own for a bit and enjoy the night."

The threat of any Kurdaitcha presence is always carefully assessed. Though ordinary Warlpiri people cannot see them they can tell their presence by other signs: the Kurdaitcha's whistling, or that of their companion birds, by their tracks, and by other telltale signs, such as windhoses travelling in peculiar directions. They also draw on reliable eyewitness accounts. If they perceive the threat to be real, only then do they react with fear sometimes bordering on panic. Camps may be deserted in the middle of the night, houses may be vacated and left vacant for months. They also take precautions. For example, if no senior people knowledgeable in how to detect Kurdaitcha presence and how to ward off the worst danger happen to be present in a house around nightfall, then everybody is prone to move to another house for the night as that is considered safer. People who are seriously ill (e.g., N in field note 5, T's daughter-in-law in note 6, and M in note 8) are assumed to be ensorcelled and to draw Kurdaitcha near so they can "finish them off"; accordingly, they are guarded by senior people. It is understood that Kurdaitcha, frustrated by not having been successful in their kill, lurk close by and may attack others as well, which is why not just the seriously ill are guarded but people in neighboring camps will also be on alert. Well-known Kurdaitcha haunts are avoided at all times, and Warlpiri people, who are rarely alone at the best of times, avoid walking anywhere on their own at night.

The root of the fear of Kurdaitcha, it seems obvious, relates to illness and death surrounding, touching, and deeply affecting Warlpiri people. I illustrate some of the magnitude of these experiences first qualitatively, than quantitatively:

> One morning, her grandchildren were surprised that Joy was not up bustling over the fire as usual, but still under the blankets next to them. She must be tired, they thought, and only when they got hungry and tried to wake her,

> discovered that she had died during the night. Joy was in her early forties. I never met four of her much older sister Dora's children, because they died in their twenties and early thirties, before I first arrived at Yuendumu. Last year, Dora lost a grandson age 37 and a granddaughter age 31. The daughter of another of Joy's and Dora's sisters was taken away by the authorities at age two, her older son died in his thirties, her other daughter's son died in his twenties. During my 18 months of PhD fieldwork, I spent a total of six months engaged in mortuary rituals, not because I was studying ritual, but because I was studying everyday life, and everyone was in the mortuary camps. Shortly after that, Old Man passed away, followed by the girl who told me about Kurdaitcha that night at Yujarlinpa.

Warlpiri deaths must also be situated within the national context. Australia is one of the wealthiest nations on earth, it has the second lowest level of gross debt among OECD states, and in 2012 its economic growth was at 3.1 percent, largely driven by resource extraction on Aboriginal-owned land.[6] Australia's Indigenous population, however, does not appear to be benefiting from this wealth in equal measure, and dire statistics paint a picture of high inequality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians' quality of life, including an up to a twenty-year difference in life expectancy (see also Glaskin, et al. 2008). It is difficult to get reliable numbers because of notorious undercounting (including non-identification), so the following should be taken as indicative. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2011, 7) states, "Male life expectancy in NT [Northern Territory, where the Tanami is located] is clearly the lowest of all jurisdictions (61.5 years)." It lists "external causes, endocrine, metabolic and nutritional disorders, which include diabetes, and digestive disorders as compris[ing] a higher proportion of Indigenous compared with non-Indigenous deaths" (11). In a nutshell, then, as Warlpiri people became enfolded into the Australian nation, their lives changed drastically, a complex and manifold process that includes experiencing new kinds of deaths, more deaths, and earlier deaths than before.

In the past, deaths happened rarely and randomly, and an accidental *chance* encounter with a Jarnpa served as a plausible explanation for inexplicable deaths. Today, what begs for explanation is not each individual death but the number of deaths that each community, each family, experiences. These deaths are not only inexplicable within the framework of Warlpiri ontology but also, I suggest, in the context of a wealthy nation. In light of this, Warlpiri people's continued palpable fear of Jarnpa/Kurdaitcha—monsters, who derive "sheer pleasure" from killing them—tells us to take seriously the very presence of Jarnpa/Kurdaitcha and what it portends.

How to Make Sense of Jarnpa/Kurdaitcha Transformations

The interdisciplinary literature on monsters suggests two avenues to understand monstrous transformation. The first, and more common, links the succession of a particular series of monsters to the focus on a succession of a particular series of human anxieties, brought to the fore by historical circumstances. An important example is Stephen Asma's (2009) *On Monsters*. He traces the specifically Western genealogy of monstrosity throughout history—from ancient Greek monsters through to contemporary cyborgs—to demonstrate how different monsters have served different needs in each historic period. Focusing on America, W. Scott Poole (2011) intertwines American history with American monsters, an endeavor which produces a lineage starting with the monstrous in early colonialism, via gothic America, science gone rampant, alien invasions, to deviant bodies, haunted houses and—most recently—the American undead (see also Carroll 1990). This path understands the monstrous as a concept that emerges in different shapes or forms, embodying historically specific horrors that feed on contemporary self-understandings.

The period in question in this chapter—from early contact days for the people who moved to the new ration station of Lajamanu, to the past two decades at the well-established Warlpiri town of Yuendumu—has been a tumultuous one. From the nomadic hunting and gathering days and early frontier violence (including the experience of new diseases, new food stuffs, alcohol, tobacco, and massacres), Warlpiri people emerged as newly sedentized colonial subjects. The ration stations first turned into communities, then towns, acquiring in the process better infrastructure as well as increasing layers of governance. Today, they are stark examples of Australian neocolonialism. Such turbulent historical upheaval is bound to lead to mutations in the monstrous. However, as I hope to have shown, the current case is not simply a case of Jarnpa not capturing changing Warlpiri self-understandings and related fears anymore, and making way for a new and more suitable monster, the Kurdaitcha. While the Warlpiri use of the *terms* Jarnpa and Kurdaitcha may suggest such a path, it appears that not just the terms but also the *figures* merged. In this case, there is no clear succession from one monster to the next, but it could be postulated that the amalgamation of the two monsters into one constitutes a kind of waypoint of monstrous succession.

The second premise of monstrous transformation sheds light on how exactly this particular merging of Jarnpa and Kurdaitcha unfolds and makes sense. Proposed by Nina Auerbach (1995), this focuses on one monster which emerges in different guises at different places and stages of history. It appreciates that a monster can mutate *with* the times. Describing

her work as "a history of Anglo-American culture through its mutating vampires" (1), she illuminates vampires' versatility and how they thus "blend into the changing cultures they inhabit" (6). She marks this versatility as a vampire-specific trait, saying that she "can think of no other monsters who are so receptive" (6). I hope to have shown that contemporary Kurdaitcha equal vampires in their versatility.

Kurdaitcha, like vampires, adapt to the world as it changes. As Count Dracula employs a solicitor, and Eric Norseman of *True Blood* runs a nightclub, Kurdaitcha engage in the contemporary world, drive cars, stay in hotels, stop at roadhouses, and so forth. In view of this, my Warlpiri friend's anxiety that they could also be on Facebook seems reasonable. If anything, the adaptability Kurdaitcha have shown to possess seems to increase Warlpiri fears about them. Vampires, writes Auerbach (1995, 6), "can be everything we are, while at the same time, they are fearful reminders of the infinite things we are not." It always struck me that the vampire's versatility in no small part is due to its similarity to humans; "they can be everything we are," so as we change, they change (see also Musharbash, Chapter 1 herein). It is significant, then, that Jarnpa turned into Kurdaitcha, as this transfused them with more human-like traits, abilities, and likeness than Jarnpa formerly had (today, they pass as human in encounters with non-Indigenous people). This, I put forward, is the source of their versatility and allows them to adapt with ease to the rapid changes their human victims are experiencing.

Conclusion

A key point of monster theories is that a monster's metaphoric strength derives from its familiarity with a given context, its ability to seem real in a particular cultural logic. I conclude by reflecting on this statement from two different angles: Firstly, I take up the issue of "metaphoric strength," and secondly, I consider the Kurdaitcha's "familiarity" with the context through comparison with non-Indigenous people.

I cannot express my feelings about the nexus of Kurdaitcha, fear, and death any better than Poole, who (speaking about monsters in America) said:

> It is not enough to call these beliefs metaphors when they shape actual historical behavior or act as anxious reminders of inhuman historical acts, a cultural memory of slaughter. How limp and pallid to use the term metaphor for cultural structures that can burn the innocent to death, lynch them, imprison them, or bomb them. (2011, 25)

There are a number of ways in which one can understand the causal relationships between sedentization, colonization, and dramatically increased mortality rates. Warlpiri people clearly see a connection between settled life, Kurdaitcha following them to their towns, and the traumatic experience of many more deaths than ever before (see also Musharbash 2014).

While some monsters fall out of fashion, so to speak, with changing circumstances, and are replaced by creatures more adept at embodying contemporary horrors, other monsters, such as vampires and Kurdaitcha, adapt and maintain their monstrous presence (their ability to seem "real") across time. Kurdaitcha took pleasure in killing humans in the past, and they continue to do so today. However, they distinguish between Indigenous victims on the one hand, and non-Indigenous people, whom they do not harm. As Meggitt elaborates:

> White men's persons, however, are believed to be immune from *djanba*. As a proof of this, Walbiri men often pointed out to me how white men, including myself, would sleep alone in the bush without being harmed. The clearest expression of this viewpoint emerged one night when [in response to a Jarnpa suspected to be prowling close by] one man advanced cautiously to the edge of the clearing and shouted into the trees: "Keep away, *djanba*! There is a white man here. He has a gun to shoot you." A minute or so later, after Abe's courageous action, the dogs returned quietly. This proved clearly that my presence had frightened off the *djanba*. (1955, 384)

Today, Kurdaitcha continue to engage with non-Indigenous people rather than threatening them. More, through their transformations, Kurdaitcha have become curiously similar to, as well as inversions of, non-Indigenous people—that other historically disastrous and now all-encompassing presence in Warlpiri lives. Kurdaitcha, rather than driving white government Toyotas, drive black ones. Rather than structuring the daytime settlement space through their presence and ideas about offices, work, and money structure nocturnal sociality through intimidation. Rather than being visible, they are invisible—but crucially, not invisible to non-Indigenous people, who merrily report sightings of strangers covered in red ochre at the roadhouse, the airstrip, Lake Sarah Hotel, places which henceforth are avoided by Warlpiri people. The fact that non-Indigenous people have the ability to not only see Kurdaitcha but also to fearlessly look them in the eye illuminates that they themselves are impervious to the threat Kurdaitcha pose, and statistics substantiate non-Indigenous people die later in life and of different causes; moreover, they very rarely indeed die in the Tanami. The existence of Kurdaitcha and the fact that non-Indigenous people can so casually report their interactions with them—without alarm nor in order to

issue warnings—monstrously epitomizes how non-Indigenous people fail to recognize what kills Warlpiri people (evidenced, not least, by continuing high mortality rates in spite of increased medicalization and intervention).

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Notes

1. Note that Kurdaitcha are one example of a vast array of monstrous beings sharing the cosmos with Warlpiri people. Others include a man-eating giantess (see also Eickelkamp. Chapter 4 and Morton, Chapter 5 herein), evil spirits called Juju, aliens, and Minmin Lights (see also Thurman, Chapter 2 herein). Note also, that the Tanami Desert's plants and animals have experienced the same dramatic changes, during which some became extinct, others were decimated or pushed away, and so forth.
2. For some (government) information on Closing The Gap initiatives, see http://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/indigenous-australians/programs-services/closing-the-gap [accessed December 31, 2013].
3. See Myers (1986, 167–70) for some autobiographical descriptions by Pintupi people of the experiences of revenge parties.
4. It is interesting to note in this context, that Green and Turpin (in press) mention some Arandic instances (to the east of Warlpiri country, from whence the term hails as a descriptor of revenge killers) where the term Kurdaitcha is interchangeably used with other terms translated as "devil" or "monster."
5. Please note that I am using pseudonyms for all personal names and many place names.
6. See http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-03-06/australia-gross-domestic-product-december-quarter/4555882 [accessed March 25, 2013].

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Chapter 4

Specters of Reality: Mamu in the Eastern Western Desert of Australia

Ute Eickelkamp

Aboriginal people in the eastern part of Australia's Western Desert tell of a soul-destroying, devouring, malignant power called Mamu. The term, often translated as "monster," refers to both the destructive force itself and its diverse embodiments (a dog, a cat, a kangaroo, a bird, a ball of fire). I here classify and analyze a variety of accounts of Mamu—eye-witness reports, traditional stories, dreams, and drawings—most of which I documented during fieldwork in 2002 with A<u>n</u>angu at Ernabella (Pukatja), where I began ethnographic research in 1995. Ernabella is the oldest and, with a fluctuating population of between 500 to 800 people largest community on the A<u>n</u>angu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in South Australia. Run as a sheep station by Presbyterian missionaries from 1938, the settlement also served as a ration depot for A<u>n</u>angu who, until then, had been living as hunter-gatherers. The establishment of the mission marked the beginning of a comparably sedentary life, an increasing incorporation into the state, A<u>n</u>angu Christianity, as well as changing economic practices, daily routines, new forms of knowledge, and school-based education, and a rapidly growing and younger population. A<u>n</u>angu participated in the land rights and self-determination movement of the 1970s and in 1981 gained freehold title over their traditional lands covering 103,000 square kilometers. Although struggling with poverty, illness, and psychosocial stress, they have since creatively accommodated to a remarkable degree these ruptures and transformations of their horizon of meaning

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and kept alive their knowledge, traditions, ties to the land, kin-based relatedness, language, and core cultural idioms—including Mamu.

Mamu is a unified phenomenon marked by an inner heterogeneity, and the characteristics mentioned by different individuals when asked what Mamu look like, how they live, and so on, frequently contradict the monsters' appearances in dreams, stories, songs, and paintings. Part of the reason is that the boundaries of the phenomenon are not fixed, but continuously made as articulations of the fundamental relationship between experience and representation. A first sketch of its basic attributes will illustrate the point:

1. Mamu are hungry for human flesh. They want to kill and eat people. Sometimes, especially when preying on babies, they snatch and eat only small pieces from the living body.
2. Mamu do not speak, indeed have no language at all, but they bite. They can also imitate human speech and animal and bird sounds. (In one account, they could speak Pitjantjatjara.)
3. They leave no tracks. (Children tell of nocturnal encounters when only the Mamu tracks are visible.)
4. They have no children. (This is contradicted in some stories.)
5. They only come at night. (Personal encounters during the day were also related.)
6. They are always out there in the bush. ("They are all locked up in a cave.")
7. They can change into anything: cat, dog, crow, eagle or other birds, bullock, camel, or motor vehicles.
8. Mamu do not change into birds, which are the protectors of people and warn them. (Contradicted in one story I was told.)
9. They can change into anyone: men, women, and children.
10. Anyone can change into Mamu. This view is restricted to children who say that Mamu come from people (suggesting "It could be you!").
11. Mamu is like Satan. (For Christians, Mamu is fiction and for children only, while Satan is real.)
12. The snake in the Garden of Eden is Mamu.
13. Mamu steal people's souls; people should not call out others by name because that is how Mamu learn who they are. They then call out for someone, coming to a house at night, and bite out the soul from the body, making that person sick. A healer can retrieve the soul and put it back into the person. Mamu also take bad people's souls or lost souls. These days, Jesus takes the good souls.

The unstable truth about Mamu is existentially disclosing: If Mamu is a phenomenon without fixed form, its multiple appearances nonetheless express a core feeling, namely the fear of being orally attacked, invaded, scratched, bitten, and devoured. One point I put forward here is that Mamu are ever-present because they represent human appetites—greed, sexual transgression, murder, and annihilation through incorporation—that call for self-restraint (Eickelkamp 2004). Like their Arrernte counterparts, the Arrentye described by Morton (Chapter 5 herein), Mamu are monstrous because they embody lack of self-restraint and anti-social gratification of desire; they outrageously exaggerate the foundational and highly valued social impulse to incorporate other selves (souls) into their own. *Qua* this very distance from the properly human, they feed on deeply human, indeed infantile desires and that prompts reactions of fear. The extremely powerful sensation of fear in turn lends experiential reality to the monster. From such interconnections flows my interest in exploring the significance adults and children, respectively, give to the dangers that Mamu embody in the construction of truth—the social, emotional, and moral realities that matter. I do not question their existence as a phenomenon proper, as *that which shows itself*—Mamu are real! But from a critical perspective I interpret these cannibalistic monsters to be lingering at the interface of what Freud called primary process or dream thought and secondary process mechanisms of mind.

This quality of inhabiting a frontier zone between different registers of mind accounts for the versatility of thinking Mamu—hearing and internalizing mother's warning of the monstrous danger lurking in the bush after dark, dreaming it, seeing it appear on the road at night, hearing its call, running from it, narrating it, or feeling it inflicting illness. In turn, this versatility sustains its potency throughout life and historical experience. Mamu, in its many appearances, continues to structure a mood in Anangu lives across those front lines of tension between knowledge systems (see Dendle 2012, 443) that encounters with Christianity and school-based education have brought. In fact, three generations after the arrival of missionaries, attention to Mamu may have intensified on account of its intersubjective contagiousness among children, whose number at Ernabella, as in other settlements across the APY Lands, is much larger than in traditional desert family camps. Exploring the meaning of Mamu's ongoing presence is the overarching aim of my chapter.

Two more specific concerns have guided my inquiry. One is to understand the versatility of the phenomenon in relation to certain characteristics of Central Australian Aboriginal thought. As highlighted by Green and Turpin (forthcoming), the first is to condense a signifier through mutually

supportive multiple meanings. The second is what Hale (1984, 260) referred to as "the persistence of entities through transformation." Through my analysis, I add a third characteristic: contiguity, the metonymic kinship of thoughts based on their emotional or temporal proximity.[1] Mamu can "spread" like a bushfire, feeding on the mood of those moments when tension in the socio-affective core of relationships begins to surface. This "mood"—Heidegger's *Stimmung* that, as a mode of knowing, reveals a way of relating to the social and natural environment (Schrag 1958, 122; Smith 1970, 101; Mimica 1996, 223ff)—would be difficult to access empirically, were it not for Mamu.

The other concern is to understand the meaning of Mamu's highly ambivalent nature. Faced with Christian and rationalist explanations about the self and world, Anangu entertain doubts about the existence of Mamu, belief in which smacks of primitive, pre-modern superstition (Dendle 2012, 438–9). Yet this monster is a cultural technique that allows people to deal with precisely this ambivalence of being positioned as hyper-marginal (and as such central) to the Australian national imagination, namely as "remote Aborigines" who are always largely "behind" the rest and barely contemporary, yet occasionally avant-garde. As I illustrate with detailed descriptions, Mamu's inherently ambivalent nature pivots on its function to act out *and* ward off the dual desire to incorporate and to be incorporated. I argue that tales, dream accounts, and other forms of encounter with this monster help sustain a balance between the gratification of desire and constraint vis-à-vis the self and others, both within and beyond the Indigenous domain.

Cultural Contexts of Interpreting Mamu

For the Anangu I know, truth fundamentally derives from this: the placement of experiences into what Duelke (2005, 201) calls a "negotiable polychronic framework." In other words, a fixed sequence of events placed along a linear time flow of strictly "before" and "after" is not the basis for meaning-making. Rather, a polychronic framework contains the overlapping kinds of 'stories'—tjukurpa: (1) the Dreaming (Tjukurpa), which encompasses sacred stories of creator-beings and their abiding presence in the land, (2) public folklore, (3) stories specifically for children, (4) the bible, (5) contact history of "olden day stories", (6) family histories, (7) dreams, (8) make-believe stories, and (9) current events. For adults, lived experience can "tap into" and find expression at any one point of this framework, which stretches from the collective symbolic realm of the Dreaming—highly formalized in the ritual context of

song, painting, and dance—to personal nocturnal dreams; and inversely, from the assertion of the personal self to a "larger" truth when, for instance, a self-portrait on canvas is mythologized through the repeated narrativization of the image, absorbing the individual self in the process. Children, too, relate to Dreaming power in both personalized and formal ways: through learning about their inherited ancestral connections in nocturnal dreams and family conversations, traditional play techniques and verbal art, performing children's *inma* (ritual), and attending ritual performances by adults. A reciprocal relationship encompasses the entire ontological grid: *Tjukurpa*, along with God or Jesus, acts through a person's *kurunpa*, the soul-self-will and people act on their rights and responsibilities toward *Tjukurpa*. When transgression throws this moral relationship out of balance, a person's soul will be vulnerable to attacks by Mamu (cf. Funk, Chapter 9 herein).

Traditional healers, who are experts at fighting off Mamu, regard these as negative spirit powers that bring sickness when they enter their victim's body and cause internal havoc; they dislodge the soul, which will manifest as physical illness, including viral epidemics (*Ngangkari Work –Anangu Way* 2003, 30). As Wanatjura explains, Mamu embody a force that is out of place and, in this sense, does not belong: "The presence of mamu is often the same as having *an alien spirit displacing your own*" (15, emphasis added).

I have found that individuals of all generations are subjected to the reality of Mamu in one way or another. At the same time, all Mamu have gone. Some Anangu say that since the missionaries brought the bible, Mamu have disappeared because God chased them all away. Such a statement has both literal and metaphorical connotations. In the first instance, it means God has pushed the monsters aside (*kiti-kitini*) toward Western Australia,[2] where he locked them up in a cave so that they cannot come out and chase people. Secondly, it means that, for some, the Christian faith has rendered Mamu as something perceptible by the senses (locked away and out of sight), a matter for disbelief (an attempt to also push it out of mind): "It's all *ngunti*, a made-up story to frighten the children," or worse, the devil's work. To believe in Mamu may even amount to heresy, or at least to a testimony to being ignorant, like "in the old days, when we didn't know better, when we didn't even know how to eat sugar and lollies."

These shifting explanations of the presence and disappearance of Mamu reflect the diverse ways in which Anangu today allocate truth-value to their age-old monster-figure. The heterogeneity of, and emergent doubt about, the reality status of Mamu also signals the novel dimension of existential anxiety that Anangu now live with: They are well aware of the judgmental gaze of the non-Aboriginal world that condemns their belief in monsters as child-like, ignorant, and pre-modern. But in this prolonged

encounter with a powerful and seemingly unassailable other, Mamu have neither become more human-like nor visible to white people, as has the Jarnpa turned Kurdaitcha-figure of their Warlpiri neighbors to the north (Musharbash, Chapter 3 herein).

Mamu Traits and Habits

In order to locate Mamu within the Anangu specters of reality, I grouped its appearances according to the cognitive state during the encounter, arriving at the categories outlined below.[3] I paid particular attention to the temporality of statements as these reveal something about the perceived truth-value. Almost all stories documented in 2002 were related in the past tense, affirming the attribution of matter-of-factness to the account along with named places, as well as highlighting the uniqueness of the event that was witnessed by known individuals.

While Awake during the Night

A man sometimes sees lights (like from a car) out bush. These disappear upon approaching. His wife recently saw a man without a face and with a long cape on the road to Amata. The same woman heard a Mamu calling "ooh" near Ernabella while she was driving along, and a six-year-old boy in her company heard it too. A sixty-year-old woman remembers seeing a red ball of fire as a child just after she and her siblings had settled down to sleep. A seventy-three-year-old woman describes her father's childhood memory of being approached by a huge dog-Mamu during a hunting expedition with the men. The boy was under a makeshift shelter and a flock of birds fell onto its roof, covering it like a protective blanket from the Mamu passing by instead of attacking because the sun was just beginning to rise and the birds took off.

In Nocturnal Dreams

A nine-year-old girl dreamt of a Mamu with an evil face when she was in Port Augusta. It had cuts all over the body (she spontaneously made a drawing to show me). A mother in hospital after she had given birth to her youngest daughter, dreamt that a Mamu with a horrible face and a long hooked nose comes through the wall. She chased it away by affirming her wish to be with Jesus. She told the story to all her children (and her

eleven-year-old niece made a drawing for me). A woman, now in her seventies, had two dreams of Mamu during her childhood. In one of them, it touched her with its paw, but did not bite. She explained, "I was asking myself what I had done to be visited in the dream by Mamu. But God chased them all away, he took our fear and belief in them."

While Awake during the Day

I recorded two memory accounts, both told by older men who saw Mamu as black dogs trying to attack their souls (one is presented in detail below).

Hearsay Family Stories of Encounters during the Day

A seventy-three-year-old woman remembers her father's account. As a boy, he was following his father on a hunt when he heard and saw two Mamu that roared like camels and looked like donkeys. Birds had come to warn the party, and when the monsters approached his mother appeared and protected the boy. She sat down on the path of the Mamu, blocking their way. When the boy looked up, one of the Mamu had assumed the appearance of a camel, but only the child could see it. A sixty-year-old woman tells of her mother and sister hearing a call like a dog's howl—"peah-peah-peah"—walking on a road to Cooper Pedy. A flock of birds had come before.

Folklore or Children's Stories

As an example of this category I provide my translation of one of a number of children's bedtime stories told in Pitjantjatjara by three older women in 2002:

> A blind old Mamu-man, his Mamu-wife and their two Mamu-dogs live in a large cave. The Mamu-wife is the hunter with dogs and it is she who catches a woman and her son (about eight years of age). The two are in a camp by themselves while father was hunting kangaroo. The Mamu woman leaves her live prey in the cave with her blind husband. The captives find a large pile of human bones in the very back chamber of the cave. They realize what is happening to them and escape through a small opening. When Mamu-wife comes home, she is furious to find the victims gone. She tells one of her dogs to chase them and get them by the throat to kill them. However, instead, relatives of the victims kill the Mamu-wife and her other dog outside the cave, which they set on fire, killing the Mamu-man inside.

Being Bad

Differing in kind from the above, this category overtly applies the idea of Mamu to people. It contains references to Mamu in the context of accusing someone of behaving badly and perhaps of being bad, such as the snake in the Garden of Eden, a petrol sniffer, a corrupt person, especially if a political leader, or generally someone who shows too much self-interest (see also Haddon, Chapter 7 herein).

Something Looking Like a Monster

An eight-year-old boy exclaims, "Mamu *nyaratja*!" (there's a Mamu), when he sees a green-grayish creature with long ears on a poster advertisement for a Star Wars video in a supermarket. A six-year-old boy saw a man without a body in a movie, which he thought looked like Mamu. I here include accounts of novel things whose interpretation A<u>n</u>angu modified on account of subsequent experiences. A sixty-year-old woman explains that A<u>n</u>angu thought white men were Mamu when they first saw them, and also the camels on which they came riding.

* * *

Evidently, Mamu is a versatile figure that appears in various shapes and sounds, in different modes of conscious and unconscious mentation. Its reality and persistence, I suggest, rest on the cultural capacity to switch with ease between logical secondary process mechanisms of mind and primary process thought characteristic of dreams and play, where something is represented by its opposite, or a latent meaning appears in condensed form or is rendered highly ambiguous (Freud [1900] 1982, 745–69; [1915] 1991, 190–3). Another way of understanding Mamu is as a mental schema, that is, as a culturally enhanced pattern of basic human affective-cognitive dynamics. This malignant power is palpable; it is embodied, can be heard, seen, and represented. However, schemata transform over time. The visible encounter with Mamu during waking life appears to have been more common in the past when, according to the memories of older people, children, like *ngangkar<u>i</u>* today, could *see* Mamu. By contrast, none of the children I asked in 2002 had ever seen a Mamu during waking hours, but all had heard it and of it. They thought it looked like "pussycat." For adults at the time, the most intense and common manifestation of Mamu was in lucid dreams (that may be co-experienced), while it seemed to escape direct visual encounter during waking life.

Ngangkari, past and present, are skilled at seeing the invisible, that is, to look through appearances or the disguises of manifest content at the thing itself, which may be why these healers do not describe (at least not in their published self-accounts) what Mamu look like without their trickster clothing. The following memory account by a now very senior man, Dickie Minyintiri, captures this:

> When I was still a child, I also learnt about dangerous and unseen spirits called mamu. Mamu often arrive in clouds of dust. Some of these mamu are very dangerous. We'd know when they had come in close because there would be a lot of dust around. We'd get up and go looking for them. If we couldn't find them at first, we'd come back for our kulata and miru—our spears and spear throwers. Carrying them, we'd go off searching for the mamu. We'd say, "Well, we know where they are. They are close by but they are hiding from us." We would scare them with our power because they'd be shivering in their hiding places. They'd jump out and try to run away, but, of course, we'd spot them and we would take up the chase.
>
> (Ngangkari Work –Anangu Way 2003, 22)

Features, Metamorphoses, Ambivalences

Mamu have distinctive physiognomic features. Some occur in all accounts, others in just some or in states of transformation. I discuss these with an emphasis on the ambivalences they embody through (1) their appearances as attacking animals, (2) their capacity to simultaneously effect covering and uncovering, (3) significant external body markers, and (4) "activating" the color red.

Cats, Dogs, and Dangerous Women

Visual renditions of Mamu by young people and children are notably similar, showing cat-like features (claws, long teeth, pointed ears), an upright human posture in full front view, red eyes, and cuts all over the body and face. Conceivably because of their experience of different historical chapters of local developments and exposure to many years of storytelling, descriptions by adults are much more diverse, if dominated by the image of the dog. Mamu as dog appears in the Dreaming, collective memories and personal encounters in the state of wakefulness. Men in particular recount memories of childhood and youth when they *saw* Mamu in the body of a dog, and I presume this may be linked to the Dog

Mamu Dreaming. This traveling myth is part of the esoteric knowledge and therefore not open for consideration. I would suggest, however, that the sacred symbolic charge of the canine image that women and younger people will at least have heard about valorizes the evocation of dog in other more "mundane" encounters with Mamu. And vice versa, the close emotional relationship that many Anangu have with their dogs feeds into mythic and cosmological articulations (cf. Rose 1992).

There is a perceived link between camels and dogs as Mamu. The ethnographer Mountford (1962) reported how Pitjantjatjara speakers told him in the 1930s that, upon first sighting camels (introduced to Central Australia from the mid-nineteenth century), they thought these were gigantic dogs. And further, that the white man had come to kill Aborigines in order to feed them to these huge dogs.[4] I documented several accounts where people heard Mamu making the sound of camels, or a pounding galloping noise. One of the oldest women painted a metamorphosis into Mamu—*mamuringkula*—depicting a transition from Rainbow Serpent Men into human beings and then into camels. The upper section of the painting shows one part of the story of the Ancestral Woman Malila, who is falsely accused of being a Mamu because she has a crippled foot. Her two daughters are taken as wives by two brothers, the Rainbow Serpent Men, through the act of swallowing. Their devious stealth (they had tricked the daughters into following them) is portrayed as being Mamu—the Rainbow Serpent brothers turn into monsters resembling camels.

A different transition is at work in the following account, told by an old man, of an explicitly personal experience of Mamu who turns out to belong to a certain category of being human, namely the man-eating *kungka paunpa*, which I understand to literally mean "young woman [who] roasts." This is the female equivalent to the man-eater Pangkalangka (see Morton, Chapter 5 herein). A self-confessed Christian, the narrator emphasized repeatedly the actual nature of the incident—that it really happened and that he remembers it all from firsthand experience. I translate from Pitjantjatjara and paraphrase:

> As a youngfella, I was hunting kangaroo on my own, not far from here. I was too young to have a hunting dog. With my spear thrower and spears ready, I poised and thrust the spear into a kangaroo I had spotted crouching in the grass. The very moment the spear went into the front leg the kangaroo began to transform. It changed into a black dog. That dog wanted me to feel sorry for him and, holding up its injured paw, [he demonstrates] it started to hop towards me. When it was really close, the dog tried to bite me. I ran leaving my spears behind and this is when the dog showed its true face. It wasn't a kangaroo, but a Mamu trying to trick me. Its ears started to grow really long and ugly, and the tongue as well, hanging out of its mouth.

> Its eyes turned red. I ran back to the main camp and there, several *ngangkar̲i* gave me a treatment. I had a biting itch all over my arms, like spiders crawling under my skin. The *ngangkar̲i* gave me a massage and pulled out two long sticks from my temples. My soul was all right. That Mamu dog was a woman, a *kungka paun̲pa*. [Brief pause] Now there are no more Mamu. God, Mamalu, our Father, chased them all the way out west, he locked them up in a cave, and they won't come out now. God made everything—the rocks you can see over there, all the game and vegetable food. We do not need to fear Mamu anymore.

As he was drawing a picture of the cannibal dog-woman, the old man commented that his eyesight had deteriorated so much that he now could not even draw what he saw with his own eyes then, whereas before, he used to excel in painting *Tjukurpa* on cave walls. His struggle to render visible on paper an imagistic memory charged with conflicting feelings is telling; the drawing turned out miniscule, crammed into the corner of an A3 sheet of paper and as such was in stark contrast to the much larger scale of image projection on cave walls. Perhaps the memory had shrunk in terms of its emotional significance at this late stage of life: He also pointed out that this dog-woman had, unlike the other elongated parts, a very short tail.

This rich image of the hunter being hunted references Mamu as *kungka paun̲pa*. In most other accounts, a strong distinction is made between the two: Mamu are non-human creatures, whereas *kungka paun̲pa* are human women. Theirs is a state of being that could happen to anyone. Not so with the devilish spirit-like beings—for adults, the relationship between A*n̲*angu and Mamu is such that people can be like them, but they are not the same "species." This is one reason for the intellectual possibility that Mamu have "all gone," or that they are to be classified as "made-up." For children, the "structure of plausibility" (Luckmann 1970) is markedly different. They say that Mamu come from people, and that anyone can change into them. With Luckmann, I take this to reflect a basic pattern of the boundary-making of the social world during childhood, when, on account of the dominance of the family context in children's construction of the world, non-human entities come into being as projections of images of significant adults. In the old man's dense account of meeting the dog-woman, the distinction between monster and human is blurred. This may signal another kind of transgression: Conceivably, the purpose of this blending of categories is to sustain what in any case is a rather delicate separation, namely between phantasy and its realization. A hunting dog might have helped sustain that separation, but in the direct encounter between the man and his prey, something fierce and fiery was unleashed. I here surmise that this old man, hunting oddly on his own in his young age, had illicit sexual desires for a female relative (*kungka paun̲pa*), which caused feelings of guilt

and fear that took on the form of the persecutory Mamu-dog-woman. And so does anxiety damn us, I suggest and agree with Róheim (1933, 263), who saw that "anybody who wishes to 'eat' his own kin will be 'eaten' by the demons."

Covering/Uncovering

In personal encounters with Mamu, as well as in traditional stories, birds are frequently mentioned as protectors of people. One old man specified that it used to be *luunpa* (red-backed kingfishers) and *mirilyirilyi* (fairy wrens) that warned people about the approaching danger. As protectors, these small birds come in flocks, covering the hut of potential victims like a blanket.

There are two ambivalences, or a coupling of opposites. First, the covering up: It can mean both protection and deceptive disguise, intimidating armor or, more precisely, de-facing and de-personalization. Petrol sniffers who like to wear blankets like capes or sweaters with hoods that they pull over their face, present both aspects at once—they are vulnerable and threatening, scared and frightening, shamed and accusing. One man in his mid-twenties, who was addicted to inhaling petrol fumes, made a drawing about, as he put it, his struggle with the good and the bad within himself. Notable is a morally ambivalent winged figure on the left, a satanic Mamu flashing its teeth at a Holy Spirit bird in between the self-defender and the monster. Onlookers are divided into those supporting his lethal struggle to give up the addiction and fellow petrol sniffers who encourage him to continue.[5]

Another ambivalence of bird-like creatures is their appearance under the different aspects of size and individual identity. The shifting classification is inversely related to the idea of covering as protective/threatening. Small birds whose individual identity is occluded by the large numbers in which they arrive protect people from Mamu attacks. The opposite was found with regard to people: A defaced, non-identifiable person is perceived as dangerous. By contrast, birds that appear as large individual bodies present a powerful image of harm—like dogs, they can turn to ripping people apart.

Big staring eyes are often described. As an expression of the dual fear of looking and of being seen (or ocular devouring), staring is connected with blindness. This can apply to both the evil power and its victim. In several stories, a human being kills a Mamu by rubbing hot ashes or charcoal from the fire into its eyes, but old blind Mamu also make their appearance. Other accounts tell of a blind victim, usually an old man, who makes an easy prey for the monster.

External Body

Typically, the small external body parts—ears, nose, teeth or fangs, hair or fur, nails or claws—grow long in the process of becoming Mamu. The elongation or "outgrowth" is perceived as ugly and the narrator, child or adult, would shake head and shoulders, uttering a disgusted "Brrrr." The opposite also occurs; the extremities are crippled and small.

Cuts covering the skin over the entire body surface are another feature, particularly in children's Mamu drawings. Children did not explain why their Mamu showed bleeding incisions, but it seems plausible that it signals the monster's invincibility; it can survive all attempts by the child to kill it. Beyond Mamu, cuts reveal another ambivalence: They can be both beautification and punitive injury. Ritual scarring is an example of the first, although not practiced anymore. Young people still playfully slash the skin with sharp objects and burn the lower arms with pieces of hot coals from the fire. Here again, both "making pretty" and inflicting or receiving injuries play a part. The aim of cutting as injury is "to make the blood come out," which is also an often-announced threat between fighting women.

Cutting and burning the skin to make "something" come out belong to a more comprehensive phenomenon—that of being open, *aḻa*, as opposed to being closed, *pati*. The two aspects are significant markers of states of being and are explicitly referred to as such. Ceremonies, songs, and stories can be open for everyone to see or closed, meaning restricted to particular contexts of revelation and sections of the society. The competence of a healer, for example, is referred to as having an open hand, *maṟa aḻa* (see Goddard 1992), whereas closed body parts, especially ears, signify ignorance. However, it is the special skill of *ngangkaṟi* to enter the body of a person afflicted by Mamu and to extract it without making cuts, which is why older healers especially are concerned about medical surgery. The forced entry by a biting Mamu is a frightening thing, as the children's drawings of the monster as typically covered with bloody incisions make palpable.

Red

As the small body parts grow longer at the onset of a metamorphosis into Mamu, the facial orifices and the eyes in particular turn red. A decorative painting by a local artist was unintentionally associated with Mamu because of its red-glowing lobes in the center.

Red means heat, and makes explicit associations with a burning sexual desire, with strength and power, or with anger and fury. Women, for example, avoid wearing red skirts because it is indecent to emphasize the lower female sexual organs (not so the breasts). In contrast, fully initiated men wear their

red headbands with pride. A burning throat, *liri kampanyi*, describes anger and a hot throat, *liri waṟu*, fury. The throat, *liri*, refers to temper, "blood" and "blood pressure" (Goddard 1992, 55), boiling, as it were.

Red is (like) fire. In one childhood memory of a sixty-year-old woman, a Mamu appears as a ball of fire from behind a tree, threatening to devour the children who have just settled down to sleep. Lighting a tree and then being killed by its opposite, namely heavy rain, or being killed by a burning tree that falls onto the back of a person, are transfigurations of the same theme that I have analyzed in detail elsewhere (Eickelkamp 2004). I mention these to illustrate how a signifier is condensed through multiple meanings. I add that a healer can kill Mamu with fire, and point to one particular pattern of engaging the monster—and other all-consuming forces: to fight the same with the same, that is, fire with fire, as people do in containing bushfires. (Conceivably, the same dynamics play a role in being a petrol sniffer: fighting pain with hurt.) Fire too then signals ambivalence—danger, greed, and destruction on the one hand, and nurture, warmth, and the protection of the family hearth on the other (cf. Morton 2011).

Conclusion: Persistence through Versatility

Long after the arrival of missionaries at Ernabella the image of a devouring malignant creature is alive and real in the Aṉangu cultural imagination. At the same time, people entertain doubts about the existence of Mamu. It has been versatile in adjusting itself to the changing life-circumstances, including through its disappearance forced by an "enlightened" Christian condemnation as something "made-up." This versatility is sustained through condensation, transformation and, as I highlight in conclusion, contiguity.

In 2002, when I visited Ernabella to study Mamu, bushfires had been burning in the area for almost six months, "in the wake of severe fires caused by antecedent abundant rains and fuel production throughout the central deserts in the three years between 2000 and 2002. The country was blackened, and I could not recognize some of the places in the rocky ranges that I had last seen in 1999. Adolescents responded to the new look of the country by dying their hair in the colors of fire—charcoal underneath and orange or blonde tips—and some girls were wearing long black skirts with flames printed on them.[6] I feel the immediate presence of fire and the smell of burnt country played a part in orienting people toward the devouring monster; both are highly "contagious" and can spread quickly. This was also the time when one of the oldest women had begun to create a series of

Mamu paintings. As I think is a general pattern in the Anangu world, a theme was in the air "prodding" people's minds, which helps explain why I was told unusually many Mamu stories.

I cannot say what exactly "triggered" the acute orientation toward Mamu in that year but would place this within the larger political context of Anangu lives: This is the extremely ambivalent place that Aboriginal people and especially those living in so-called remote communities occupy in Australia's national imagination. Negative reports in the public media portray "remote Aborigines" as socially dysfunctional (on account of economic marginality and colonization, but also implying Anangu are "backward" and "primitive"), and these appear alongside—yet without connection to—glowing appraisals of the thriving Indigenous art movements (often hailed as "revolutionary" in the print media) that have become a national asset in the global aesthetic economy. Extended into the policy domain such mixed messages and concomitant white sentiments—guilt, pride, pity—feed back into the lives of Aboriginal people, who are relentlessly expected to change and respond to new programs designed to improve their circumstance. Here, processes of devouring have seeped into the postcolony. Although framed somewhat differently, Musharbash (Chapter 3 herein) too sees that the neocolonial white presence, seemingly unassailable in terms of socio-economic and political strength as well as sheer physical health, influences the Indigenous reality of contemporary monsters. I put forward that such powerful external definitions of the reality of one's life-world—an alien spirit threatening to displace your own—requires some form of warding off and the ongoing monitoring of one's self-perception through intellectual, affective, and social efforts. This may be both productive and depleting: Constructive possibilities to sustain the balance of the ontological grid and to satisfy the cultural imagination go hand-in-hand with annihilating demands to recalibrate the existing structure of plausibility and the relationship between desire and restraint. Nonetheless, while many Anangu worry about the future of their cultural and political autonomy, their capacity to think multiple meanings simultaneously, to harness a non-linear framework of events across time and place, to live ambivalence and to persist through transformations seems inexhaustible. The vicissitudes of Mamu tell us this much.

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Notes

1. Contiguity has long served as an explanatory concept in analyses of thought. Freud ([1900] 1982) first described it in his exposition of dream work, where contiguity and similarity form the two major forces in unconscious mentation. Interestingly, his distinction between two modalities of contiguity, displacement and condensation, mirrors the characteristics of thought that linguist-anthropologists have found across Central Australian Aboriginal groups; it underscores the widely observed capacity to "switch" mental codes and communicate across different states of cognition in dreaming and waking life. Frazer ([1922] 1987), in his theory of magic, emphasized the agentive aspect of contiguity (or "contagious magic"), which he saw as a version of sympathetic magic. In Jakobson's (Jakobson and Halle 1956) linguistic investigations, contiguity (metonomy) and similarity (metaphor) are seen as the two fundamental principles of language structure (which, together with Lévi-Strauss, was the source of Lacan's position that language is the structure of the unconscious).
2. This may reflect a general association of "west" with danger, as has been observed for other Central Australian people. Wilkins (2001) reports that Arrernte speakers connect the west wind with evil and with products of Western culture (cited in Green and Turpin, forthcoming).
3. There are three categories (*Tjukuritja*—from the Dreaming; song performances; and projective identifications in the Rorschach form perception test), which I have not included here.
4. Other novel things perceived as threatening were assimilated into the schema, especially during the early contact phase. For example, artist Niningka Lewis remembers in one of her history paintings made for sale in 2013 that: "In the early days we were scared when we saw Mamu in the sky," referring to airplanes.
5. Since the introduction of Opal fuel in 2005 petrol sniffing has almost ceased on the APY Lands. However other forms of substance abuse (especially of cannabis) exist.

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Chapter 5

A Murder of Monsters: Terror and Morality in an Aboriginal Religion

John Morton

Aboriginal Australia is famous for its so-called Dreamtime, otherwise known as the Dreaming, a period of creation in which supernatural ancestors or "totem gods" brought the known world into being, leaving an ongoing legacy in the form of rules governing everyday life and a ritual master plan guaranteeing the reproduction of the world (Stanner 1979, 23–40). There are many cultural forms of the Dreaming across the continent, but the word itself entered into English via the central Australian language now commonly known as Arrernte (also spelt "Arunta" or "Aranda" in older literature).[1] In Arrernte, the term *altyerre* has "dream" among its referents, but it also denotes the original creation period, its ongoing persistence for all time, narratives and ritual dramas depicting marvelous events, and powerfully charged sacred sites in the landscape where these events originally occurred (Henderson and Dobson 1994, 105–6; Green 2012). Apart from the totemic ancestors, with their superhuman characteristics and affinities with natural phenomena (animals, plants, etc.), this dramatic conception of the world also tells of evil, misshapen creatures called Arrentye. It is these murderous "devils" or "monsters," as they have come to be known in English (Henderson and Dobson 1994, 247), that I describe and analyze in this chapter.

Building on Eickelkamp's (2004) detailed psychoanalytic study of the place of monsters in central Australian cosmology (also see Chapter 4 herein), the gist of my enquiry is contained in the question: Why should the Dreaming contain such nightmarish things? To answer this question,

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I propose to show that there is a structural relationship between Arrentye and totemic ancestors that is akin to the Kantian relationship between the monstrous and the sublime. To do this, I begin by giving an ethnographic summary of Arrentye, describing them in general terms but also concentrating on one particular type—a gigantic, cannibalistic humanoid known as Pangkelangke. In outlining the phenomenology of Arrentye, I stress the protean, hybrid shapes that they take (cf. Cohen 1996, 6–7, and Musharbash, Chapter 1 herein) and the way that physical abnormality underlines their subhuman existence. Hence, the basic defining feature of Arrernte monsters is their inhumanity—not simply in relation to their diabolical physiology, but also in relation to their brutal, callous, and sadistic behavior. The ideal Arrernte world is a place free of monsters, yet they persist in making unscheduled appearances. Like monsters everywhere (Cohen 1996, 4–6), no matter how frequently exorcized, they always return to threaten havoc.

In order to explain the staying power of Arrernte monsters, and because Arrentye are thought to afflict the soul, I next describe some key aspects of indigenous psychology that clarify the role Arrentye play in social life. In line with Eickelkamp's (2004) findings in a nearby area of the Western Desert, I show how the *kwerrene* (soul) that is vulnerable to attack is a kind of culturally constructed ego or ideal self to which is attached a moral and emotional field associated with kin relatedness, generosity, and the growth of children into responsible adulthood. Maleficent monsters are the active antithesis of this ideal self and everything associated with it. Their frightening presence—in dreams, in stories, in illness, and in the world at large—measures the work that must be done to sustain the moral order of kinship, with fear being the other side of the desire to transgress (cf. Cohen 1996, 16–20, and also Funk, Chapter 9 herein).

However, in the third part of this chapter I draw attention to a seeming paradox at the heart of monster phenomenology. While Arrentye are indisputably awful, dangerous, and forbidden, they also find a place among the totemic ancestors or "gods" associated with the recreation of the world. While monsters are reviled as subhuman in one register, they are respected as superhuman in another. In this latter guise, Arrentye are no longer evil in any simple sense, even though they do commit monstrous deeds (murder, cannibalism, etc.). Rather, they move into a kind of Nietzschean world where "good and evil [have] but a shadowy meaning" (T. G. H. Strehlow 1978, 17–18). To come to grips with this seeming paradox, I calibrate it against the claims of two writers who have considered the intimate relationship between monsters and gods—Géza Róheim and Richard Kearney.

Róheim was a psychoanalytic anthropologist who worked in central Australia in 1929. In *The Riddle of the Sphinx* (1934) he undertook a Kleinian-inspired analysis of the relationship between (what he called) "demons" (Arrentye) and totemic ancestors, maintaining that the latter are, psychologically speaking, transformations of the former. He suggests that negative identification with Arrentye and positive identification with totems are correlated with life-cycle phases of character development and parallel articulations of fantasy life. In describing the Arrentye paradox, I engage with Róheim's argument and embellish it in order to link it to a broader philosophical problem broached by Richard Kearney in his *Strangers, Gods and Monsters* (2003).

Like Róheim, Kearney intimates that monsters and gods are in some sense continuous, but he stresses that there are important ethical dilemmas involved in the ways we distinguish between and act toward them. Of particular importance to him are attitudes of familiarity (or hospitality) and alienation (or estrangement), not only in relation to supernatural monsters and gods, but also with respect to other people with whom we share a world. He avers that a basic ethical puzzle lies in our attempts to choose what kind of stories we should tell about ourselves and others. Should we be content with a division of the world into "us and them"—we "good folk" and those "monsters"? Or should we seek to transcend such oppositions to arrive at a more inclusive, transcendental understanding of "difference"? Kearney believes there is no final answer to this puzzle so put, since whether we define ourselves with or against others, with gods or against monsters, is far less important than whether our stories ultimately foster human thriving. While this is a philosophical problem, it is also an anthropological one, and in the conclusion to this chapter I return to it to state what might be learnt more generally from my description and analysis of Arrernte monsters.

Monsters at Large

It has been said that there is "an undercurrent of anxious feeling" (Spencer and Gillen 1899, 53) that punctuates life in central Australia. Róheim describes it as a sort of ordinary paranoia whereby people fear strange creatures that haunt their neighborhoods: "They see strange shapes whizzing in the air," he writes. "Something moves behind a sand dune. Is it only a withered tree? No, those are the man-eating giants, the demons of uncanny shape" (1934, 23–24). These "demons" are weird and their deformed bodies contain evil intent. They are all Arrentye, which means that they terrorize and provoke panic.

In common parlance, to describe people as "Arrentye" is to say that they are prone to uncontrolled anger, selfishness, or greed (Green 1992, 90; Turpin and Ross 2012, 195). Animals are also called Arrentye if they are dangerous—poisonous snakes, scorpions, leeches, biting spiders, bugs, and germs are all regarded as monstrous in this sense (Green 2010, 214; Henderson and Dobson 1994, 247; Turpin and Ross 2012, 195). But while all these creatures, human or otherwise, are menacing and offensive, true Arrentye take antisocial menace and offense to the wildest extremes. Sometimes equated with Christianity's Satan (Green 1992, 90; 2010, 214), they exaggerate every known devilish characteristic in the central Australian world.

Arrernte people told Carl Strehlow (1907–1920, 1: 11–15) that there are a number of subspecies of Arrentye. One walks like a dog, but has human hands and the legs of a kangaroo. Its ears and teeth are large, and long hairs sprout from its chin and nose. Its back carries white hair, but its belly is spotted red. It roams at night, looking for lone people near their camps; when discovered, these people are torn to shreds, and their souls are taken to the monster's home to be devoured. Some other Arrentye are more humanoid, but have large, round ears, upward-pointing hook noses and bowed legs; they are also inordinately hirsute. Yet others fly like large, black birds, although they too have human features. They slay children with their boomerangs and tear out their victims' livers, souls, kidneys, and fat. Others again appear as rabbit-eared bandicoots, with enormous ears and teeth; or as long-haired, deformed women who bind a person's soul with string; or as hairy, green, bat-like creatures who fly into a person's heart and break it open; or as snakes and scorpions, one of which is known for its habit of gouging out human entrails. Some monsters travel in strong prevailing winds and another—a thick-skulled, emaciated, skinny-limbed being with long fingernails and toenails—dwells only in whirlwinds. There is also a humanoid couple who travel back-to-back in storms so that they can see in both directions at once. Winds or storms may in addition carry a pair of skinny, white, emu-like creatures capable of travelling underground and emitting fire with their excrement; or a pair of snakes from which emerge other smaller snakes of various hues—black, white, or red; or gigantic centipedes with cloven feet and piercing fangs.

The deformed appearances and habits of Arrentye appear to be almost unlimited, except insofar as they are conditioned by the environment in which Arrernte people dwell (see also Musharbash, Chapter 1; Eickelkamp, Chapter 4 herein). Nevertheless, there is some consistency in individual types. For example, one kind of Arrentye is known as Pangkelangke. This "large and hairy ogre" (Swan and Cousens 1993, 13) is likened to a gorilla

(Breen 2000, 43). It occupies many locations across the landscape, its home invariably being a cave (a favored dwelling place for other Arrentye as well). Pangkelangke may be male or female, often with exaggerated sexual organs and appetites (Róheim 1988, 95), but their mode of existence is essentially the same irrespective of gender; that is, they indulge a habit of "stealing, eating and killing people who stray off their path" (Kenny 2004, 281).

The concrete presence of Pangkelangke at particular underground locations is impressed on children from an early age through warnings not to stray far from camps. In a quite recent documentary about one such Pangkelangke (Fenech 1994), Christobel Swan explains:

> Our old people told us about the Pangkelangke, how the Pangkelangke would take the children playing in the creeks or sandhills at night. The man would wait for the kids and then grab them and run off. Mum and Dad were always careful with us. They knew the Pangkelangke was out in the hills.

Christobel Swan's description of her parents' care in telling her about Pangkelangke underlines the sheer facticity of monsters for Arandic peoples. Monsters are *real*—hence the "ordinary paranoia" that they provoke. They are part of the Dreaming, so they are real for all time. In the Pangkelangke documentary Doug Abbott, addressing a possibly skeptical audience, spells this out at length:

> From time beginning Pangkelangke used to roam this land. And I think even in white man's culture they talk about caveman. You know it's still there. Some people have seen the Yeti, the Yowie, or whatever they call it. That *is* the Pangkelangke man. When we look at stories in the newspaper, we look at them together, all Arrernte people, Southern Arrernte mob, [and we say:] "Eh, *twertnekenh* ["truthful"] this story; this story *is* true! People are talking, white people even talking about this Pangkelangke man . . . He's been out there; he's out there, you know! He's been out there!"[2]

A story about a Pangkelangke or other Arrentye is a type of "dreaming." Róheim classified such dreamings as "folk tales" or "narratives about 'growing up,'" suggesting that they are "secular stories" that usually finish with "a happy ending" (1988, 95). But Arrentye and Pangkelangke are not alone in these stories, since they are generally ranged against people described as *intwerte*—"good, beautiful, pretty" (Breen 2000, 14). Róheim refers to these antithetical protagonists as "normal" (by which he means not disfigured), but he emphasizes that they are eternally youthful, with light skin and golden hair, and heroic. A typical story tells how they are

finally victorious in their battles with monsters, "frequently against the most impossible odds." They generally slay the monsters and incinerate the bodies to make the world safe from predation.[3] The typical ending of one of these stories states that the beautiful people "always live there [at their camp]," which Róheim interprets as the implicit equivalent of "they lived happily ever after." Hence, while the stories "abound with themes of castration, cannibalism, murder and coitus," homely, reassuring endings are generally guaranteed (Róheim 1988, 95–96).

Dreamings of this type, which divide the world into "goodies" and "baddies," are referred to as "outside" stories, meaning that they are suited to the ears of children and the uninitiated. I recorded one such dreaming while conducting research for the Palm Valley Land Claim in the 1980s,[4] which was later retold in evidence by senior traditional owner Norman Ratara (Gray 1999, 121). The story centers on a Pangkelangke man who roams in the Palm Valley area and an older man who lives with a second man much younger than himself. While hunting away from camp one time, the young man comes across the Pangkelangke who, unbeknownst to him, is his father. The Pangkelangke fails to recognize his son, kills him, and places the body in a shallow grave. The older man gets worried about the young man's prolonged absence from camp and goes out on a search. He finds nothing and so decides to return home to make spears; but, before setting off, he notices maggots tickling his feet. He begins to eat the maggots, following their trail, only to find that it leads to the young man's body, whose bones he proceeds to pick clean. He then returns home, regurgitates his food, and brings the young man back to life before setting off to follow the Pangkelangke's tracks. When he eventually finds the Pangkelangke cooking a wallaroo, he attacks the ogre with spears, and they fight along Palm Valley until they reach the Pangkelangke's home, where the old man "finishes" the monster by spearing him right through both temples. Various landscape features in Palm Valley now evidence this story, and the Pangkelangke man is still there to this day.

A central feature of this story is the denial of kinship: A father kills his son, although the filial link goes unrecognized and the paternal role is split between two protagonists, the evil Pangkelangke and the old man acting *in loco parentis*. While the "good father" restores a disastrous situation caused by the "bad father," the former indulges in cannibalistic behavior more typical of the latter, suggesting a strange identity between the two. The idea that monsters represent internalized "bad parents" is central to Róheim's interpretation of the uncanny nature of Arrentye (1934, 23–41). In this case, the Pangkelangke is uncanny in a strict sense—known-but-not-known, kin-but-not-kin, an alien confronting his own self. The situation is narratively resolved by his demise, leaving the *intwerte* people free to "live

happily ever after." It is generally characteristic of an "outside" story that it keeps the "inside" at bay, an idea that is also metaphorized in instructions to children to avoid the caves where Pangkelangke and other Arrentye dwell.

Soul Afflictions

The "beautiful people" who slay and destroy Arrentye represent an ideal self to which a growing Arrernte child aspires. They refer to a number of qualities that are definitive of this ideal self, the most obvious of which are unfading grace and superior strength. But these physical characteristics are implicitly aligned with moral qualities associated with kinship. The "beautiful people" look out for others and they know how to take care of themselves; they assist human flourishing through right relationships and are aggressive only in defense. In Arrernte, this nexus is captured in the relational qualities of the soul—*kwerrene*—which is defined as a person's "source of vitality, well-being and sense of purpose" (Henderson and Dobson 1994, 454). Correlatively, it is the soul of a person that feels fright, in which case it can flee the body, causing debilitation and possibly death. The grace and strength of the "beautiful people" are hence symptomatic of a healthy and courageous soul. By contrast, Arrentye are everything that this soul is not—ugly, aggressive, mean, unsympathetic, and unfamiliar. No good Arrernte soul knows itself as a monster, because monsters conjure "the dimension of the invisible, the realm of the shadows, not seeing, the unwanted mirror image and, ultimately . . . non-permissible desires" (Eickelkamp 2004, 179).

There are two situations in which a person's soul is understood to be vulnerable to attack by Arrentye. The first relates to dreams and the way in which they reveal a kind of hidden "truth." As T. G. H. Strehlow describes, dream images are witnessed by a person's *kwerrene*, and this is understood as journeying to a "strange and often frightening world of unknown shapes and sounds" that cannot normally be seen or heard. If a dream takes the form of a nightmare, the soul suffers "terror and exhaustion" as a result of being "chased by the malevolent shapes seen in the dream" and only escapes obliteration by "rushing back into the sleeping body" (1978, 24). A nightmare is thus the experience of a troubled soul—one that is not at home in its body, but feels compelled to explore the ugly and disturbing in another place. Correlatively, a healthy person keeps body and soul together.

The second situation relates to sickness and curing. Arrernte "charm doctors," as Carl Strehlow (1907–1920, 4(2): 38–42) dubs them, are called *ngangkere*, a term which is often now translated into Aboriginal English as "witch doctor." A *ngangkere*'s occupation is to overcome the effects of

sorcery or illness that can be attributed to intervention by Arrentye (see also Musharbash, Chapter 3 herein). The "charm doctors" operate by sucking out or otherwise extracting evil forces that have pierced a person's body, forces that are physically represented by objects—pieces of bone or wood, lengths of string, and spear-tips—that are produced by sleight of hand in curing sessions. *Ngangkere* are also blessed with visionary gifts of the kind not known to laymen in waking life. They see Arrentye that arrive in the wind and can kill them and tear them to shreds; and they see these same evil creatures in their dreams or visions and do battle with them with stones and spears.

Ngangkere can be born with their special gifts (Turner 2010, 142), but they are also initiated into their arts by coming under attack from Arrentye, who throw stones that pierce the body and cause madness. In this crazed state, a *ngangkere* is completely robbed of his senses and taken to a place where monsters commit further violence on him before bringing him back to camp, where more experienced *ngangkere* resolve to drive away his tormentors. Still in a state of delirium, a novice *ngangkere* is watched over and instructed for some time by the more experienced practitioners until he is cured and ritually "finished," partly by having his tongue pierced so that he can more effectively suck Arrentye from his patients.

Ngangkere are thus shamans—"men of high degree" (Elkin 1977) who come to the world of demonic forces in the manner of a vocation and violent apprenticeship. Their familiarity with Arrentye and these creatures' techniques of "soul murder" implies a strength of spirit that is a function of having suffered and survived mental disturbance or insanity. Such "struggles with demons," whether in laymen's dreams or in visions "of high degree," are evidently psychosomatic and part of what Eickelkamp (Chapter 4 herein) calls a "cultural capacity to switch with ease between logical secondary process mechanisms of mind and primary process thought characteristic of dreams and play." But given that a person's *kwerrene* is the "source of vitality, well-being and sense of purpose," the struggles are also "sociosomatic" and therefore ethical or moral in character. The following example of an Arrernte dream illustrates how this is so.

Róheim (1988, 5–92) recorded several series of dreams narrated to him by Aboriginal people. The following is a brief fragment from the dream series of an Arrernte man known as Old George, who recalled for Róheim a dream from his younger days.

> [Old George] says that this "raw meat dream" was "very bad": "I was at Ulara. I dreamed that I went hunting and caught a kangaroo. I roasted the kangaroo and would have eaten it, but it was raw, 'nasty.'" When he reported

> this to the people of Ulara they all shifted camp, because it is believed that such a dream indicates the approach of an [Arrentye] . . . The place in the dream where he caught the kangaroo belongs to the water totem; and his wife's father was then the head of that totem. (1988, 90–91)

Róheim points out that Old George was being "antisocial" in this dream, because, rather than preparing the kangaroo for a lonely feast, he should have been giving the kill to his father-in-law so that it could be properly distributed among all the relatives in camp. Hence, Old George's in-laws "regarded such conduct as being more appropriate for an [Arrentye] than for a human being"—they "felt that there had been a break in the restraining forces that govern society, that a man-eating [Arrentye] had gotten loose somewhere." The fear of the marauding Arrentye was thus a way of registering Old George's subversive intentions toward his wife's father—what Eickelkamp (Chapter 4 herein) refers to as the social "mood" of their relationship—with the bad intent being projected onto the imagined Arrentye, whose impending approach was prefigured through Old George's dreamt temptation and greed for meat. While Róheim does not expand on the meaning of the meat being "nasty," it was in all likelihood covered by the Arrernte word *kurne*, which means "morally wrong" (Henderson and Dobson 1994, 73)—"bad, no good; wicked, evil; sinful" (Breen 2000, 26). As Old George explained, his dream was "very bad." Róheim believed that his intent had been downright murderous and that killing the kangaroo was symbolic of affinal (in-law) parricide: "In other words, the dream expresses this formula: 'I would rather kill and eat him than go without the things that I desire'" (1988, 91). But what Old George desired was literally not fit for human consumption.

This is a clear-cut case of a monster being both attractive and forbidden (Cohen 1996, 16) and mediating between "the gratification of desire and constraint" (Eickelkamp, Chapter 4 herein). Old George had been a young man at the time of the dream and would have still been progressing through stages of initiation. Róheim says that, when working in central Australia, he was often

> told that if a boy were not initiated something terrible might happen. He might become an [Arrentye] . . . fly up into the air and kill and eat all the old men of the tribe. This is what the ritual must prevent. (1932, 72)

But cannibalism is quite general in people's appreciation of Arrentye—monsters are fundamentally creatures that consume others (cf. Eickelkamp 2004; Chapter 4 herein). They attack and devour other people's *kwerrene* and

so destroy the sources of their "vitality, well-being and sense of purpose." Folk tales, curing rites, and dream auguries all testify to the ongoing existence of mean, immoral intentions in the community, but they are also the means by which these afflictions of the soul are understood and controlled. Hence, all antisocial behavior is regarded as human predation, but monsters must be omnipresent if they are to be successfully denied.

Monsters and Gods

I now move on to the paradoxical side of Arrentye, which lies in the fact that these creatures can explicitly figure as totemic ancestors—beings responsible for the creation of the world and the Law. Dreamings about the totemic ancestors are more esoteric and ritually significant than the more exoteric children's stories discussed earlier in this chapter, yet there is a level of continuity between the two. Indeed, it is sometimes said that the folk tales, as "outside" stories, have "inside" significance that remains unrevealed except to the fully initiated. In his commentary on the Pangkelangke documentary mentioned earlier, Doug Abbott describes how, when he was a child, his elders would point to a cave in the hills where a Pangkelangke lived, causing him and other children to hide under blankets in fear. He adds:

> elders told us when we were young never to go near those caves because the caveman lives there. The stories have hidden meanings. We didn't go near caves because maybe there were sacred things in those caves.

The "sacred things" referred to are stone and wooden objects—*tywerrenge*—that embody the totemic ancestors and are stored in caves for occasional use in religious rites.

Doug Abbott's account makes it clear that there is some form of complementarity between these cave-dwelling objects and Arrentye, the former appearing to be esoteric versions of the latter. There is in fact a kind of symmetry between them that is evidenced in the way dreamings are narrated. While the ending of folk tales describes how Arrentye are destroyed and the beautiful people live "happily ever after" at their camps, the ending of esoteric stories has it that the totemic ancestors grow tired and exhausted from their labors and turn into the sacred objects that live forever in their caves (T. G. H. Strehlow 1978, 18). The symmetry thus takes the form of a contrast between the beautiful people's ongoing life in the flesh and the totemic ancestors' substantiation after death.

The symmetry is reduplicated in the contrast that Arrernte people draw between the life-giving soul—*kwerrene*—and a second soul known

as *artwe nyaltye*. While the *kwerrene* is of the flesh and is completely annihilated after a person's death, the *artwe nyaltye* originates from an ancestral *tywerrenge* and has a permanent form, returning to its sacred object and cave when a person dies (T. G. H. Strehlow 1971, 601). This is not a personal survival and, like Arrentye, ancestral identities are opposed to the open vitality of *kwerrene*. Yet *artwe nyaltye* are fundamentally a part of every person, albeit esoterically so. Ancestral identities—called "*tywerrenge* names"—are secret, and there is a profound sense in which *artwe nyaltye* remain a more or less unknown quantity. While the *artwe nyaltye* acts as a double and guardian spirit, warning its alter ego of danger, it remains out of sight (except occasionally to others). As if dwelling inside darkness, it cannot be visualized, only heard (599). Like Arrentye, its presence is uncanny—familiar yet unfamiliar, sensed but not seen, "un-conscious."

Esoteric dreamings about the ancestors in certain respects do not differ dramatically from exoteric ones involving Arrentye. Some of the ancestors are explicitly referred to as Arrentye—like the murderous, cannibalistic son who, unbeknownst to his father, takes hunting trips along the Finke River, spearing other men and tearing out their fat until the evil deeds are finally discovered by his father (C. Strehlow 1907–1920, 1: 90–92; T. G. H. Strehlow 1947, 1–5; 1971, 577–84). There is also an Arrentye that takes the form of a dingo (wild dog) who travels far and angrily consumes innocent native cat people until he is decapitated and his head rolls back to its home (C. Strehlow 1907–1920, 1: 92–93; T. G. H. Strehlow 1933). Even when ancestors are not named as Arrentye, they indulge in monstrous behavior—like the desert bandicoot ancestor who feeds ravenously on his own bandicoot children until he is struck lame by his sons (T. G. H. Strehlow 1947, 7–9). In all these examples, the ancestors become *tywerrenge* and are celebrated in secret ceremonies restricted to initiated men. Spencer and Gillen (1899, 329–34) describe two such ritual performances in which pairs of elaborately decorated performers appear as growling monsters and cannibals. So, to the extent that every person's *artwe nyaltye* is totemic and ancestral, it is more or less indistinguishable from an Arrentye. But why should this be so?

Géza Róheim's view, at least in relation to initiation and the male cult, is that it is due to the socially productive internalization of aggression. He works this idea through in relation to a key figure called Twanyirreke, who is part of boys' initiation. There are dreamings about Twanyirreke and his wives, who are sometimes collectively called Arrentyepernentye—a "monster family." The family lives in a peculiar reversed world (Strehlow 1907–1920, 1: 102–4; Róheim 1934, 152). Twanyirreke walks on one leg, severing the other one and carrying it over his shoulder when away from

camp. His shield is made from echidna skin, and his fighting club is the tail of a giant goanna. He dresses in live snakes, and he uses possums and native cats as hunting dogs. His wives make him gruel containing excrement and urine, and they feed him poisonous fruits. When the wives encounter a shallow, trickling stream, they see it as a vast flood blocking their path; and he arrives quickly when he travels a long distance, yet takes ages to cover a small amount of ground. Twanyirreke's skin is so tough that it cannot be pierced by spears, although porcupine grass spines penetrate him easily and can kill him. The family makes massive bush fires, but only when the vegetation is wet. All these reversals make sense when it is understood that Twanyirreke is employed to "turn a boy around" at initiation.

Arrernte "man-making" (Spencer and Gillen 1899, 212–70; 1927, 175–222; C. Strehlow 1907–1920, 4(1): 10–43) involves Twanyirreke as an agent in circumcision, which is enacted with great theatrical fury (Strehlow 1971, 395–403)—fury typical of the unbound anger of an Arrentye. In exoteric lore, Twanyirreke is said to capture a novice and decapitate him; and, while he restores the boy to life, he subjects the youth to further violence before taking him away to be circumcised. Women and children hear the sound of a bull-roarer swung at the time of circumcision and are told that it is Twanyirreke's voice, which is like the roar of a Pangkelangke. They act terrified and scatter in fear. However, the initiate is told that what women and children believe about Twanyirreke is untrue. He is informed that Twanyirreke is the bull-roarer and that this is a sacred object that has gone inside him to modify his *kwerrene*. Indeed, his soul is now said to *be* Twanyirreke. Hence, although boys are initiated to prevent them becoming Arrentye, their souls become Arrentye-like—Twanyirreke is, as it were, "an-Arrentye-who-is-not-really-an-Arrentye." For Róheim, this means that his aggressive spirit has been simultaneously released and contained—that is, made subject to ancestral Law.

Initiatory ordeals continue over some years, after which a man may take his promised wife and raise a family. So long as he has been duly respectful to his elders and obeyed the Law, which they guard, he is also taken to a secret cave to be introduced to the sacred object, referred to as his other "own body," to which his second soul belongs (T. G. H. Strehlow 1947, 112–19). He is also properly admitted to the higher regions of the male cult and becomes free to enact sacred myths. In these restricted ("inside") ritual dramas men bring the totemic ancestors to life again, assuming their identities and their responsibilities for creating the world. They become "gods"—ultimately so, because at the end of their lives their second souls take up residence again in sacred objects in the secret caves. In a further

uncanny resemblance to Arrentye, these *tywerrenge* are described as "thirsty for blood" (T. G. H. Strehlow 1971, 447).

> Every time a sacred ceremony was being performed in [the ancestors'] honour, more blood had to flow; and this was blood which the human totemite had to draw from his own person. In sacred ceremonies, not only was the actor who represented an ancestor painted with blood, but the sacred objects, too, had their down-patterns stuck on with the same substance. Fear and reverence were the natural results of these experiences. Another result, however, was affection. The fully-initiated tribesman had paid a heavy price for his introduction into the spiritual world, and he accordingly valued his sacred rites and traditions very highly. Once he had reached his goal, he discovered that he possessed special and highly intimate personal bonds with the supernatural powers. He believed that he was himself the reincarnation of an ancestor . . . He was not merely an initiated man, but a person of supernatural descent.
>
> (T. G. H. Strehlow 1971, 416–17)

This is what Róheim refers to as anxiety giving way to "reverence, love, and identification" (1934, 157).

The movement is sacrificial—a kind of aggression turned against the self, or a will to death—and it effects the complete transformation of monsters into gods (ancestral *tywerrenge*). But while complete, the transformation is not final because the sacred objects endure in the caves as the source of all new life. Every Arrernte child and every totemic creature comes into being as the reincarnation of an ancestor, so each one has its "other body" from which its second soul has emerged to sustain corporeal life. But the growth of this life in the flesh is a kind of alienation from the ancestors, their sacred objects, and the caves in which they dwell, so that gods become monsters once again. The relationship between monsters and gods is thus dialectical, as is the relationship between what T. G. H. Strehlow calls "man's twin souls" (1971, 594). Like the relationship posited by Freud ([1923] 2001) between the ego (the personal "I") and the id (the impersonal "It"), it is ultimately a struggle between an instinct for life and an instinct for death. Monsters threaten life, but gods demand sacrifice—and gods are the "positive counterpart" of monsters (Eickelkamp 2004, 184), the self in purposeful dissolution, the Other.

The dialectic is also one between opposed, yet intimately related, orders of morality and ethics. I have shown in this chapter how, in a negative sense, evil Arrentye belong to the order of love and sympathetic identification with oneself and others. As Eickelkamp says (Chapter 4 herein), people's souls become vulnerable to attacks by monsters when there is a

threatened breech in the moral code directly governing human relations. That is, when people are cruel and fail to enhance human life, they are terrorized themselves and "get what they deserve," since wanting to "consume" others courts the attentions of cannibals. Good health and happy relationships depend on the capacity to feel sorry for others, which keeps monsters at the margins. It is different with submission to the Law, since other forces and a more general, abstract notion of justice are at work.

It has been said in a related context in central Australia that initiation into the Law assures "conformity to things of transcendental value" and ensures that "concerns beyond the immediate feelings of relatedness will prevail when vital moral issues are at stake" (Myers 1986, 119). In these circumstances, a sense of compassion arises not in relation to the living, but in obligatory respect for the dead, who are embodied in sacred objects. Hence men are able to deny sympathy for the living and mete out punishment "in the name of the Law" (T. G. H. Strehlow 1970; 1997)—something which the ancestors may also do from beyond the grave by withdrawing their role as guardian spirits (Kenny 2004, 285–86). Monsters may discourage bad behavior, but gods discipline, punish, and rule. Nevertheless, it is the gods who ultimately guarantee the renewal of all life and the master plan that is the Dreaming.

Conclusion

In sum, Róheim's argument is that, in growing up, Aboriginal children develop healthy, robust egos via mechanisms of projection, with sadistic impulses being denied and discharged into the environment, leading to a radical split between "them" and "us"—bad strangers and monsters as opposed to those who are close, familiar, and good. However, to become adults, children submit to ancestral Law—that is, they marry, extend their relationships in new ways, and begin to participate in the ritual life of the totemic ancestors, correlatively developing a cultural superego through the introjection of sadistic impulses that were denied in earlier years. In other words, there is a shift from a world where good and evil, "us" and "them," are sharply separated to a world where they coexist. This entails a correlative shift from fear to respect and ultimately to the complete dissolution of the ego in favor of the id.

Róheim's projection thesis is in line with Cohen's view that "the monster is an incorporation . . . of all those loci that are rhetorically placed as distant and distinct" (1996, 7) and that "the monster stands as a warning against exploration" and "prevents mobility" (12). Following Róheim,

I have described the *necessity* of such exploration and mobility in Aboriginal central Australia and how they bring mature men away from the domain of monsters into the ambit of the ancestors. All this is reminiscent of Kearney's claims in *Strangers, Gods and Monsters* that monsters are unrecognizably "transgressive, obscene, contradictory, heterogeneous, mad" (2003, 4) and remind the ego that it is "never wholly sovereign" (3), but that gods, whether "benign" or "cruel and capricious," *are* recognizable because their "numinous power and mystery exceed our grasp and bid us kneel and worship" (4). While we turn our heads *away* from monsters, we turn them *toward* the gods. In the first case there is a corresponding general fear of strangers and the unknown (cf. Eickelkamp 2004, 178), but in the second case there is a coming to terms with those more distant from our ways. Gods and monsters are related to this extent; in overcoming the fear of monsters that lurk within ourselves, we will an approach toward strangers. In central Australia, this means movement toward alliances with "them"—people who are not close kin, but relatives *in-law*.

Kearney maintains that we cannot do without either monsters or gods, since both are involved in the narrative articulation of ethical choice. On the one hand, monsters can be scapegoats that embody our illusions of innocence, but monsters also measure the important difference between good and evil. He agrees with Cohen that we cannot finally lay monsters to rest; the point "is not to kill our monsters but to learn to live with them" (Kearney 2003, 62), because they "are always trying to show us something" (121). It is, after all, the alleged elimination of monsters in scapegoating that fosters "*illusions* of innocence." While Arrernte are not beyond scapegoating, they never wholly deny their monsters. Monsters are always there spelling danger because they are part of the Dreaming—hence the "ordinary paranoia" that pervades daily life.

But this is puzzling in relation to the sublimation of monsters into gods. According to Kearney, much Western philosophy, in its realization of a close relationship between the demonic and the divine, has concluded that there can be no viable distinction between them—that, at root, good and evil are either somehow absolutely conflated or subsumed by a monstrous void that is "neither good nor generous nor giving" (2003, 201). Kearney finds this unacceptable, because it implies that the "awesome" qualities of the gods are pointless, meaningless, and chaotic. As I understand it, Kearney's case is that genuine obeisance to the gods, their rules and their dictates, cannot rightly promise an absence of justice or good judgment. Rather, the world of true gods properly conjugates good and evil by undoing unwarranted certainties about who is or is not a true monster. It does not surrender the good, but generalizes it and imposes it more comprehensively.

As I have shown here, this is precisely the sense in which Arrernte monsters come to be reconfigured as ancestral beings acting as ultimate guardians of the Law. Arrentye and totemic ancestors are intimately related, and both are fundamental to the Dreaming, but while monsters promise pain and suffering to those who deny their better selves and kin, the ancestors demand that pain and suffering are borne for the larger and longer-term purpose of extending relationships and enhancing life. Hence, in line with Kearney's view, the ethical relationship between monsters and gods is fully dialectical in character. This reminds us not only that monsters can sometimes do a useful job, but also that gods and holders of the Law whose power is self-serving and chaotic are not gods or holders of the Law at all. They are monsters and fully deserving of the name. The decision to call that name remains ours to make.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

1. The country of the people who speak Arrernte dialects is partly bordered by Western Desert and Warlpiri lands (see Eickelkamp, Chapter 4; Musharbash, Chapter 3 herein).
2. Thurman (Chapter 2 herein) discusses a cave-dwelling ogre called Nugabig who dwells in Mak Mak Marranunggu country. Doug Abbott's commentary makes it clear that he would regard Nugabig as a type of Pangkelangke, even though it lives outside Arrernte country. While the Yeti is the Abominable Snowman of the Himalayas, the Yowie is a giant "hairy-man" figure whose name derives from Aboriginal cultures in New South Wales. There is an internet-based Yowie Research Centre that reports sighting of Yowies from the length and breadth of Australia—http://www.yowiehunters.com.au/ (accessed March 6, 2014).
3. Eickelkamp (Chapter 4 herein) discusses the symbolic significance of the incineration theme in terms of "fighting fire with fire." Among other things, fire not only connotes the intense anger and aggression of monsters but it also signifies the courage and bravery of those who fight monsters. It seems to me that burning the bodies of defeated Arrentye symbolizes the return to peaceful normality that is implicit in a folk tale's happy ending—that is, fire (justifiable anger) cancels itself (unjustifiable anger) out.
4. An Indigenous claim for land under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*.

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Chapter 6

Burnt Woman of the Mission: Gender and Horror in an Aboriginal Settlement in Northern New South Wales

Mahnaz Alimardanian

"Burnt Woman" is one of the most talked-about spirit figures of the Aboriginal (Bandjalang) mission in northern New South Wales, where I conducted my fieldwork between 2011 and 2012.[1] She is a ghost looking for her lost child and for revenge, appearing as an Aboriginal woman from "long ago" with a face half beautiful and half disfigured by fire. She habitually haunts the mission and is known to everyone who lives there. The landscape surrounding the settlement seems made for her as a wanderer from another world—the shady bush locations on the mission back-road, the graveyard at the foot of the mission hill, the blind spots in the hilly landscape, the creeks, swamps, and often-flooded open fields shrouded in winter mist are all her haunts, all places where she is prone to shriek and scream on cold, dark nights. The following is just one account of her actions:

> My partner's cousin isn't from here, but he was visiting the mission. We had a black car here. He was a bit drunk and he slept in it one night, while we slept inside with the kids. Later, he told us there had been a woman knocking on the window of the car. It was Burnt Woman! She was standing sideways, showing the pretty side of her face, and she got him out of the car. She made him follow her, all the time showing him her pretty side. He was in a trance! Next thing, he woke up over there, near the shed down there, a long

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> way from here. She'd captured him and was taking him away. He must have snapped out of it and realized who she was, because she turned around and showed him the burnt side of her face. He bolted back up here and locked himself in the car! Next morning he told us that there'd been this pretty girl knocking on the window, saying "Come on. Come on." She had long black hair; she was *very* pretty. She kept tempting him, but he sure got a fright when she turned around!

While Burnt Woman is not a sanguinary character and is not known to bring death to her victims, her ambiguous corporeality signifies well her monstrous otherness (see Musharbash, Chapter 1 herein). Stories about Burnt Woman's visits are invariably gendered. She is a genuine object of fear for men, but women are inclined to be sarcastic about her. This is perhaps unsurprising given her seductive *modus operandi* (like that of the Maramarua, Presterudstuen, Chapter 8 herein), but it raises the question as to why she alone among the several demonic figures that torment people at or near the mission should be so focused on men, and especially men from other settlements. Moreover, why is it that of all the local spirit figures she is the one most talked about? There are other ghostly figures in the vicinity of the mission, some Aboriginal, others Euro-Australian, and these are regularly or occasionally encountered at specific locations, often houses. But Burnt Woman is unique in the way that she travels, and her mobility increases the frequency of encounters relative to other ghosts. Nevertheless, as I seek to show here, these are not the only reasons she is the best-known demonic spirit figure in this locality. Most importantly, her story is commensurate with Bandjalang historical and cultural inheritance.

Burnt Woman's story is a sad one about mutilation and loss, but the narrative is flexible and open to free interpretation. Her origins are uncertain, although everyone agrees that her mortal body was destroyed in some conflagration. On the one hand, stories associate Burnt Woman with the relatively recent history of the community and the coming of Europeans; on the other hand, she is also associated with more archaic stories and spirit figures. Her ambiguity is especially amplified by the way she singularly manifests both beauty and deformity; the classical (pre-contact) form of the culture associated independent female figures with taking the form of threatening witches and seducing sirens. As I argue here, Burnt Woman's ambiguity, particularly to the extent that it is gendered, appears to have arisen out of a transformation of these local classical themes in relation to social changes brought about by European colonization and enforced settlement on missions. I further suggest that Burnt Woman is an anomalous, paradoxical figure through whom people make sense of their recent situation as a colonized people (also see Musharbash, Chapter 3, Eickelkamp, Chapter 4 herein).

Given that Burnt Woman engages differently with different types of people—women and men, children and adults, locals and strangers—there are evident social dimensions to her existence, including the projection of desires and distress (also see Morton, Chapter 5, Funk, Chapter 9 herein) and the mediation of control and discipline (also see Morton, Chapter 5, Presterudstuen, Chapter 8, Thurman, Chapter 2 herein). These dimensions are part of the everyday dynamics of community life, but are refracted "super-naturally" through Burnt Woman's agency. She has influence and those haunted by her prompt discursive ripples and fields of gossip through tales of their encounters. In that regard, Burnt Woman is a motivator, and her galvanizing powers are beyond those of mortals, being at once fickle, freakish, and frightening, at least to men. Those qualities, along with her uncertain and perplexing identity, make her something of a joker or trickster figure, an agent of disturbance and transformation. As I will illustrate here, Burnt Woman chaotically enters the social field and, in doing so, distracts people from life's routines by encouraging reflections on masculinity, fatherhood, discipline, and community responsibility. In this way, her petrifying presence has moving effects.

Burnt Woman's Story: An Open-Ended Narration

Unlike many other Bandjalang spirit figures, Burnt Woman is always recognized as a human ghost. While she was once an Aboriginal woman who "lived a long time ago," people are not really sure when that was. Some treat her as if she were from time immemorial; others suggest that she lived during the early days of contact between Aboriginal people and colonial settlers. Everyone agrees that she was killed in a fire incident that occurred at a nearby camp. The mission itself is part of an Aboriginal reserve that was formed in the first decade of the twentieth century, but historical records show that before that, in the very early days of the nearby town, Aborigines used to build their *miamias* and *gunyahs* (shelters) on the river at the edge European settlement. This camp was later moved further north and eventually to the present settlement area (Jones n.d.), although a few people continued to camp away from the mission up until the 1940s. There are different opinions about whether the fire that killed Burnt Woman was accidental, with a domestic fire getting out of control, or whether it had been set on purpose. Some say the situation arose because she resisted eviction from her shelter by "whitefellas" who wished to build on the land where she lived; others suggest the fire was caused by the careless action of an Aboriginal man from a different country; others again say that the accident was due to an irresponsible husband and that it also caused the

loss of Burnt Woman's child. Some versions of the story state that this beautiful Aboriginal woman slept with her child in the shelter and they were both burnt to death, while others speculate that she was raped before the fire was set and the child abducted. Time has passed, people have come and gone, the landscape has changed, but Burnt Woman continues to seek revenge and search for her child. Whatever her origins, she, like all troublesome ghosts, has never been laid to rest.

People who tell Burnt Woman's story tend to adapt her fate to suit the circumstances of the narration. On one level, Burnt Woman provides a highly dramatic way in which to retell local oral history and transmit knowledge of the past to the next generation in. This knowledge involves long memories of dispossession of land, "early-day" massacres, and the forced separation of children from their families. Historical records show that the first arrival of settlers (including convicts, soldiers, and timber cutters, as well as those taking up property) occurred between the 1820s and the 1840s. As early as 1827, regional communities competed for the novelty of having a *dokkai* or *mogwi* (ghost or White Aborigine) living among them (Hoff 2006, 3, 7). The Burnt Woman story, although temporally indeterminate, thus synchronizes with long-term collective memory encompassing traumatic changes for local Aboriginal people who saw their country occupied by timber-getters and gold diggers, given over to sugarcane plantations, and their people die *en masse* by European hands (Oakes 1981; Bell 1964; Medcalf 1993; Keats 1990; Steele 1984; Ryan 1964). No particular recorded event matches the specifics of Burnt Woman's horrifying story, but each element of that protean tale can easily be matched with an aspect of community memory and long-term intergenerational trauma.

Nevertheless, the story is more than a jumbled narrative with the potential to mediate historical knowledge, since Burnt Woman occupies a well-identified place within the spiritual landscape of the mission and its nearby town. Her vivid story is not simply a "narrative of loss" (Wilce 2007), since the substance of her existence is in the present and manifests itself in the midst of contemporary life. While she has roots in history, she has meaning in the here and now of the community's social and cultural arrangements. These arrangements themselves have roots in the past, but not only in terms of deficit and tragedy.

Burnt Woman's Dual Nature: The Terrifying Seducer

Burnt Woman can be envisaged through a dramatic collage of people's descriptions. She is a shadowy feminine figure usually appearing at a distance, a lonely woman with long, black hair and a body that shudders

in the wind, a woman who sometimes stands silently and sometimes runs screaming between trees. Her image evokes mystery, vulnerability, oppression, and desperation; hence, she attracts audiences, provokes curiosity, and engenders a will to knowledge. But as Burnt Woman comes closer, or as one allows her to get close enough, the sense of mystery dissolves and is displaced by feelings of seduction and fear.

Long, black hair is an important element of feminine beauty in the mission community, admired by women and attractive to men.[2] This idea of irresistible allure has deep roots in local culture, being associated in mythology with the figure of the *gawunggan*, whom Calley has described as a "mother goddess" (1958, 209). Tall and graceful, *gawunggan* always possess long, flowing hair, as well as slender hands and lengthy fingernails, and dwell at certain spots in the landscape where they tend to act as sirens or femmes fatales, luring men to a mortal fate. While they are sometimes described as "fairies," the word *gawunggan* has also been routinely used to denote "any particularly attractive Aboriginal girl" (209). One such *gawunggan* dwells at a lagoon not far from the mission; she is attracted to crying children on account of once having lost her baby.

There is no doubt that Burnt Woman, as a seducer, has origins in the *gawunggan* figure, yet half of Burnt Woman's face is hideously ugly—the very antithesis of the *gawunggan*'s sheer elegance. Being both "beauty" and "beast," she recalls not only the *gawunggan* but also another local feminine spirit known as *darargan*. This term has been glossed as "female ghost" (Sharpe 2002), but people generally refer to her in English as a "witch." In a profound sense, a *darargan* is everything a *gawunggan* is not, since witches are generally believed to have once been troublesome old women—troublesome enough to have had their legs broken and been left to die. As with Burnt Woman, a *darargan*'s sad fate has left her forever vengeful and dangerous. In some cases *darargan* are especially dangerous to children, whom they seek to abduct, but *darargan* are also prone to playing menacing tricks on adults as well. For this reason, the known dwelling places of *darargan* are often avoided, particularly at nightfall. While adults generally say that they can bravely stand up to a *darargan*'s mischievous attention, she may nevertheless confuse them by "disappearing" their possessions, frighten them by throwing objects at them, or even physically injure them by chasing them down and sinking her fingernails into their backs. While the ever-seductive Burnt Woman is first of all modeled as a siren, her ugly, ghostly character and vengeful spirit also make her something of a *darargan*.

Burnt Woman is neither one thing nor the other; she is both—"two-faced." Her demeanor confounds the *gawunggan/darargan* distinction, which is both simplified and complicated by its appearance as a

simultaneity. Spirit figures like *gawunggan* and *darargan* are less well known in the community than they were in the "old days," although *darargan* certainly remain the better known of the two; but Burnt Woman is well known to everybody. Her ability to manipulate men, to tempt them and seduce them, has become a kind of fresh and lasting "mytheme" operating widely in the community. Unsurprisingly, this too has locally classical roots, since the temptation of men was a well-worn motif in the old mythology associated with male initiation, enforced sexual abstinence, and attendant social behavior. As Calley (1958, 209) relates, the male equivalent of the *gawunggan* in days gone by was the "handsome young man" or *balugan*, "the ideally good-looking male" who is the "hero of every legend and myth . . . be he warrior, lover or culture hero." *Balugan* began their journey toward marriage and manhood by proceeding through three stages of initiation, during which "they were expected to remain celibate, any infringement of this taboo being punishable by death" (209). Since men did not marry until they were in their twenties, the taboo made considerable demands on any "ideally good-looking male" who might be attracted to a real-life *gawunggan*. This was in turn refracted in the mythology. As Calley puts it:

> The virtuous neophyte seduced by a lustful girl is an oft repeated theme in Bandjalang legend. It expresses the tensions experienced by the young man in finding his sexual urges frustrated. The fact that the girl is always represented as the aggressor, and that the neophyte always dies as a result of breaking the taboo indicated how powerful a sanction it was. (1958, 209)

The last initiation performed in the area of the mission occurred during the 1940s, albeit in an attenuated form—although I have been told that some Bandjalang initiations continued up until the 1960s. Nevertheless, full-blown initiation has not been a key factor in local culture for many decades, which perhaps accounts for the waning of the *gawunggan* figure in local cosmology. (The *balugan* figure is rarely, if ever, spoken of in my experience.) But why should she be partly displaced by Burnt Woman, with her paradoxical visage experienced on the stage of daily life as opposed to that of the ritual theatre? And why does an unambiguously gorgeous seducer become "two-faced" by carrying the mark of the witch? In this instance, recategorization also seems to be decategorization. What young men have come to fear is not simply ravishing allure, but also "the other side"—the ugly side—of archetypal womanhood. Why should this be?

Burnt Woman's Presence: The Mode of Seduction

In spite of Burnt Woman's original misfortune, her painful story does not evoke sympathy. Like a *darargan*, she is frightening; and whatever the reason for her not fully belonging to this world or the other, and no matter how confident people are about the reality of an "afterlife," one thing is certain as it was once put to me: "some [souls] stick around and she is one of them." Nils Bubandt (2012) suggests that the contemporary Western phenomenon of ghosts in limbo is related to late-modern forms of psychology and ideas about the self, so that in Western spirit beliefs ghosts are increasingly seen as suffering from existential *angst*. Like corporeal selves, they are "psychologised as beings with interior psychic spaces and emotional troubles" (6), and they struggle with trauma and desperation. He suggests further that, while allied spirit beliefs in other parts of the world may arise through the global spread of Western forms of "enchantment," they can also be articulated differently or even take an opposed form. Rather than ghosts being "hapless victims" in need of "understanding," such vile creatures seek nothing but revenge and must be either controlled or dispelled (19). Burnt Woman, in spite of being seemingly cognate to Euro-Australian ghosts, indubitably belongs to this "un-Western" and "non-modern" supernatural order. She is not a "poor thing" who needs to "find her way"; she is unforgiving and hostile: her intentions are malicious.

Some link Burnt Woman's character directly to her alleged murder or accidental death by fire. Others with Christian orientations assert that she is the way she is because she did not have a "proper burial." Apart from the effects of Christianity, documentary and fictional accounts associated with ghosts and the afterlife are popular in the community, particularly through television broadcasts and movies. But there is no doubt that the restlessness of spirits has always been familiar to Bandjalang people. There are long-standing beliefs about the need to prevent the spirits of the dead from intruding into domestic areas where they are likely to create havoc (Bundock 1978, 264). By the same token, people now generally avoid old massacre sites, traditional burial sites, and defunct *bora* (ceremonial) grounds due to the ever-presence of the spirits of the "old people." People can occasionally receive benign visits from deceased relatives, but the spirits of the dead are typically capricious and therefore always potentially dangerous. Generally speaking, people are safe from malicious interference from spirits while on their own country, but they are likely to be tormented if they visit other areas and fail to make their presence known to local elders. This is reflected in the increased incidence of Burnt Woman's attacks on men from other missions, although she is generally not regarded as part of the local stock of

ancestral spirits. Certainly, she never receives invocations as they sometimes do. The impetus for contact comes from her alone.

Elders from the mission who have passed away and are remembered as having had occasional communication with the spirit world have always ignored Burnt Woman. She is strictly not to be known. Mission residents recall that whenever Burnt Woman was in or near the mission, female elders would call everyone inside, particularly the men and children. No one knows where she dwells exactly, but the mission area is her territory or "beat," which she particularly patrols in winter. Many men have encountered her at least once, have been touched or "grabbed" by her or have seen her staring at them on cold nights, but brushes with Burnt Woman are more frequent for men who do not dwell permanently at the mission. All women, on the other hand, tend to feel immune against her and hold little fear of being "grabbed." She is generally involuntarily experienced in one of two ways, either seen or heard; but if a victim is close enough she may "grab" him so that he feels her touch.[3] However, she cannot "catch" her victims, as some powerfully dangerous spirits can. Being grabbed is to feel something "pushing you," with pressure applied to the chest. It can also involve serious injury or paralysis. On the other hand, being caught is to be "followed" by a spirit in such a way as to produce prolonged sickness or death. Being grabbed is superficial, a sensation on the skin or the infliction of an injury, while being caught manifests as an internal feeling involving a kind of dangerous catalepsy that mutes this world and unmutes the other.

Burnt Woman's screams are often heard on windy nights, and she is an active character in the "soundscape" (Samuels et al. 2010) of the mission. Residents at the mission often collectively experience her cries and she can even be heard far away at the nearby town, although she is not the only local female spirit figure prone to screeching. The frequency of her screams and their degree of sharpness indicate the level of danger, so that people feel relatively safe and unconcerned if she sounds like she is far away. Some other noises may indicate her presence—for example, the sound of steps on a floor or scratching on walls. People might see her if she comes very close, but visual encounters are more direct and severe.

Burnt Woman normally reveals herself to men by showing only one half of her face. Hence, she appears as "one thing or the other," not both at the same time. Men touched or grabbed by her may initially see her by catching a fleeting glimpse of a pretty face at some alcove or corner. She sometimes journeys between houses at night to look at slumbering men, who may occasionally wake and catch her watching through a window. Men are captivated by her beauty and are prone to follow her, especially if they are intoxicated, but Burnt Woman always breaks the enchantment at

some point by revealing the gruesome scars from her injury. Feeling direct contact with her is horrifying, and men are seriously concerned about it. One man explained to me that he used to receive regular midnight visits from Burnt Woman, who on one occasion came close enough to his bed to touch his feet. While he suffered no serious effects from this encounter, several young men have been visited in their mission house beds and have been temporarily paralyzed and left unable to speak.

While encounters with Burnt Woman are unanticipated, she does not reveal herself randomly. Her presence carries intentions. She is interested only in men, especially men from other missions and towns; and she decides which man at what time will feel the weight of an encounter, and how. Burnt Woman's hauntings thus seem to carry a certain authority that is both gendered and correlated with territoriality. But what precisely informs her judgment? Why are some men targeted while others are free of her attentions?

Burnt Woman's Active Role: The Gendered Prankster

The following remarks are from a conversation I had with two mission women, Suzan and Joyce, about Burnt Woman:

> Suzan: Oh, Burnt Woman! She owns the mission; she rules the mission. She lives here in the bush, comes out in wintertime, and travels around and screams. She *hates* men.
>
> Joyce: I don't know why Burnt Woman likes [to get] men. She doesn't touch women; she touches men. Maybe that's because she was burnt by a man many years ago; that's what we've been told. She doesn't like men, and every winter we try to tell men that they should stay inside. [Points to a relative man listening to us and adopts a joking, teasing tone of voice.] I wouldn't care; *you* would be grabbed, not us! [Looks back to me to explain.] He isn't from here, but he's been here a long time. [Laughs.] She goes for strange men. But he's registered now, so Burnt Woman won't touch him. He's been here long enough, and he is with a woman who's from here.

In his study of postcolonial changes in Bandjalang social organization, Calley (1959) had much to say about the local mission (government station and reserve) system and its relationship to territoriality. He especially noted important transformations in postmarital residence patterns, suggesting that they were implicated in a reconfiguration of traditional territories. The original system was based on patrilineal clans correlated with local dialects and was patri-virilocal, although there was "a period before and

after marriage [when] a young man was required to reside with the clan of his bride"—a period in which the young man was said to be *ngarbintja*. According to Calley, this temporary domicile gave his affines "an opportunity of getting to know him and deciding whether or not he would make a satisfactory husband; whether he was a good hunter and mindful of his kinship obligations" (1959, 65). Although Calley does not say as much, *ngarbintja* was evidently a form of the bride service that was characteristic of Aboriginal marriage patterns across the continent, with young husbands being required to support their wives' parents before taking their wives and children back to their patrilineal clan estates (Peterson 1978). But Calley also mentions that it was common for weakened clans to permanently lose their young men, with *ngarbintja* being extended for indefinite periods. This, he suggests:

> provided a mechanism by which the clan could recruit its affines and made possible an adjustment to changed conditions without the complete sacrifice of the old structure. Clans could continue to exist long after their economic and ritual dependence on the clan territory had ceased and could amalgamate without making any sudden break with the past. (1959, 65–66)

In saying this, Calley implies that a clan-based mission system arose which was territorially similar to the one governed by the "Old Rule" (the classical form of local culture), except that the new system was no longer based on patrilineal descent and patri-virilocal residence. The new mission-based clans were extended families that often included the children of its female members and, while they were exogamous, they came to be based more or less exclusively on uxorilocal residence (Calley 1959, 73–74). As Calley states:

> the breaking down of virilocal marriage has been by an extension of the indigenous usage of ngarbintja, that a man who under the Old Rule lived with his wife's clan for a short period only, now settles permanently with them. The word ngarbintja continues to be used of such people.

While Calley was writing in the 1950s, and I have never come across the term *ngarbintja* at the mission where I worked, it is clearly this institutionalized uxorilocality that was being referred to when Joyce mentioned to me how men come to be "registered" in the mission community. This "registration" appears to make the men more secure in the face of Burnt Woman's threats; but what makes them insecure in the first place?

Under the "Old Rule" young men's anxieties related to punishment for sexual transgression—hence the theme of the *gawunggan* temptress in Bandjalang mythology. A young man was supposed to have been celibate

prior to marriage, including during the early period of being *ngarbintja*. If he broke the rule, he could well suffer capital punishment. But as Calley notes, the reformed clan system based on the missions is unlike the old system in one key respect: it "has lost its autonomy and the right to discipline transgressors among its members by force" (1959, 76), since now the state and its official agencies, including those that have run the missions, have a monopoly on legitimate violence. Nevertheless, there remains a good deal of informal social control in Bandjalang communities. Calley draws attention to the importance of gossip, especially women's gossip, and the force of public opinion in bringing about conformity, particularly in relation to the potential for prohibited sexual liaisons (96–101). He also mentions ongoing fear of sorcery, with allegations being "along station lines" (102). Both gossip and fear of sorcery, as well as concerns about love magic, are still much in evidence in Bandjalang country, so it is safe to assume that young men coming to live at the mission on a permanent or semi-permanent basis are often very apprehensive about what is in store. It is also safe to assume that such strangers are kept under a very watchful eye.

It cannot be coincidental that Burnt Woman's disfigurement was caused by a man. Whether envisaged as black or white, as a husband or an agent of the state, he did not do right by her, so she draws on an infinite well of gendered aggression spawned by masculine wrongdoing. Hers is a kind of infinite payback: hell hath no fury like a woman maimed. As with all spirit beings, she introduces a degree of chaos into people's lives, upsetting normal routines and activities, but her pranks are of a very specific kind. They pertain only to male desire. Calley notes that in the scenario of "the virtuous neophyte seduced by a lustful girl," the *gawunggan* is "always represented as the aggressor" (1959, 209), which, given the enforced celibacy of the *balugan*, must be taken as something of a projection, her ravishing beauty being a reflection of his own. In Jungian terms, she is his anima and thus seems to possess "enormous power" over him (Stevens 1983, 67). But Burnt Woman's aggression is different; she only *appears* to be driven by amorous passion as a cover for her woeful maleficence. If she is an anima figure, she seeks not love, but revenge; not pleasure, but pain; not reciprocated passion, but retaliation for the violence that caused her mutilation. Her trick is in making one appear to be the other. And as women at the mission consistently remind young men, the joke is on them.

Burnt Woman's gendered hauntings are quite systematic. Some people in the mission are concerned about her interest in children, particularly boys, but there is no particular danger to children beyond the general concern that infants have an uncanny ability to see spirits and consequently get scared. She never threatens women and never comes close to them. She might frighten girls with her screams at dusk, causing them to walk faster

up the hill toward the mission; or girls may scream back at her from their houses to show that they are unafraid. But neither scenario is regarded as truly dangerous; in fact, such circumstances are often the cause of laughter and joking, as women are generally confident that Burnt Woman has no real interest in them and that they are immune to her nefarious intent. After all, she is in the business of seduction; why would she want to seduce other women? It is men she desires—and particular men at that.

Generally speaking, Burnt Woman accosts men who have been out after dark and drinking. This fact is not lost on women at the mission, who sardonically point out that leading a more moderate life might see men less frequently afflicted by her. Men may find themselves openly criticized for irresponsible behavior if they receive visits from Burnt Woman, and young men in particular are sarcastically warned about the possibility of running across her in the dark. There is a general pattern of movement at the mission that requires that people, especially young people, return home before sunset and not leave the house during the night in order to avoid spirit encounters. Burnt Woman is but one spirit among many in this regard, but her sensitivity to the presence of outsiders in the community inspires a particular form of consciousness about their movements. The stranger may be a newly married man or he may be someone simply visiting relatives, but he is an unknown quantity either way, hence causing locals to monitor his comings and goings more closely. If he is marrying in, people will scrutinize in detail the degree to which he plays a responsible role in his new family and community, helping to look after his wife and children, as well as his affinal relatives. This matter is important in the etiology of Burnt Woman's activity at the mission, since it was a ruined domestic situation that was responsible for her injuries and the loss of her child. Burnt woman can thus be seen as an archetypally wronged wife and mother, raising precisely the same sort of questions as might be raised about any young husband's or father's domestic failings. Where was Burnt Woman's husband when the conflagration took place? Had he taken proper responsibility for his child? Was it actually his fault that the accident occurred? Burnt Woman's story, as mercurial as it is, is a fixed point for these everyday questions about family responsibility.

While I did not research family issues and the interrelationship between women and men at the mission, I think it probable that, as with *gawunggan* and *balugan*, Burnt Woman is the projection of an anima, but one that has been conditioned by a long history of colonial violence, restrictions, and controls. In many Aboriginal people's postcolonial worlds, power has significantly shifted from a masculine-dominated ceremonial domain to a female-dominated domestic one, with corresponding degrees of male demoralization (Grimshaw 1981). It is not hard to see how, in circumstances such as these, men come to be haunted not by wholly glamorous sirens, but by a seducer who is seriously, if surreptitiously, disfigured. It is

even less difficult to see why, when confronted with this mutilation, men should lie in horror.

It is not entirely clear how far Burnt Woman acts as a disincentive for young men to "go astray," even though her actions do not appear entirely random or irrational, so providing ample space for gossip and commentary. This is why Burnt woman is something like a joker. As the saying goes, she "moves in mysterious ways," but there is some sense in the chaos that she creates. All Bandjalang spirits are "jokers" in the ways in which they intervene in human affairs, upsetting the status quo and altering some situation. However, only Burnt Woman does this in the specific context of male youth and the passage to manhood, and it is there that gossip and informal judgments make their mark. This interplay between her and the larger community demarcates her unique social role—a role against which men can be measured. Although men are seriously concerned about encounters with Burnt Woman, there is some excitement prompted by her possible attention, particularly in the case of late-adolescents. For them, a small brush with Burnt Woman may confirm their developing manhood, providing proof that they are desired by the opposite sex. But an encounter is also a test. Just how far should young men pursue their burgeoning desires? Is there a point beyond which these desires are unduly dangerous? Is there a point beyond which the social costs are too great?

Every encounter with Burnt Woman has an audience. If, as Fabian (1999, 25) claims, culture is largely performative, then each experience of Burnt Woman is staged in a theatrical setting that includes much more than a lone man and his animated alter ego. Conversations ensue and are acted out, complete with humor improvised for each occasion. These seem to inspire reflection and possible change in the sense discussed by Fortier (2013), as creative responses in improvised situations. True jokers are well-known figures found in all sorts of performance events, where they generally function to "undo" some circumstances so that they can be recreated in altered form. They are part of the logic of transformation typical of *rites de passage*. Burnt Woman's actions are not explicitly amusing, like those of a court jester, but she is nonetheless a two-faced freak who likes to radically alter a situation. Her "funny side" is much appreciated by women as part of the micro-politics of family and gender relations at the mission, but the joke is solely on their men.

Conclusion

In 1965, Roland Robinson published a Bandjalang (Githabal) story involving a *balugan*, a *gawunggan*, and two *darargan* (Robinson 1965, 61–65). The *balugan*, who was called Julandeean, travelled from his home in the mountains around present-day Woodenbong to visit his sister and

brother-in-law, who lived near the mouths of the Richmond and Evans Rivers on the coast. As a powerful fighter and handsome man, Julandeean captured the immediate attention of the *gawunggan* women. He was later given one of these women by his affines and, when he left to return home, she followed him, although she always resisted his advances in camp at night. Tired of her, he got up one night and broke her legs with his club and left her there to die. The next morning a *darargan* found the *gawunggan* and cured her, leaving her at the camp and promising to return the next day to take her away. That evening, the *gawunggan* collected ferns and shaped them into a body, which she laid beside the fire. The *darargan* arrived in the morning with her sister, and they both drove spears into what they believed to be the *gawunggan*'s body, eventually realizing that they had been tricked. They chased after the young woman, who by then had reunited with a repentant Julandeean to consummate their relationship. Julandeean killed the two *darargan* with his spear and took his new wife home to his country, where they married and raised a family.

Everything about this "happy ever after" story is the reverse of what is implicit in stories about Burnt Woman. Julandeean belonged to an era in which men were powerful and strong, and could guarantee their continued dwelling in their fathers' countries, even as they were forced to seek spouses elsewhere. Moreover, *gawunggan* were *gawunggan* and nothing else, and unambiguously ranged against *darargan*, so that positive and negative anima figures remained distinct, even as they changed places in the story and reversed roles. In the end, a full passage to manhood is achieved by the establishment of the proper order of things, with the reluctant *gawunggan* submitting to a man's protective power and dislocation from her kin. How different this is from the predicament of contemporary Bandjalang men and women, where the principal fears and anxieties attendant on marriage and raising a family fall to men generally uncertain about their future and ability to provide.

I have suggested here that Burnt Woman is a prankster who helps mediate the transition from youth to manhood. In the postcolonial situation in which she is found, men's ambivalence toward women has taken hold to the point where beauty and the beast are no longer easily distinguished and negotiated. Women seem to find this situation most amusing, but it is the soul of men that generates the image of a two-faced woman.

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Notes

1. This was ethnographic research for my PhD project funded by the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, La Trobe University, Australia. Although the Aboriginal settlement where I worked is routinely referred to as "the mission," it was originally a government settlement, not a religious mission station.
2. A young Bandjalang woman responded to my comment on her new hairstyle by explaining that having long hair put her in danger of being targeted by spells or accused of acting like a witch, so she cut her hair. Long hair is associated with both erotic magical power and vulnerability to magical forces, particularly since a strand of hair can be used against the person in sorcery.
3. It does not appear to be in Burnt Woman's nature to smell. While smell plays a significant role in the recognition of some local spirits, particularly the spirits of deceased relatives, I have not been told of any type of odour that indicates Burnt Woman's presence. In Aboriginal Australia, deceased ancestors are often said to recognise their living relatives by smelling the latter's sweat (e.g. Povinelli 1993, 31–32, and see also Thurman, Chapter 2 herein).

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Chapter 7

Demons Within: Maleficent Manifestations in the Hare Krishna Movement

Malcolm Haddon

Hiranyakasipu was the most ferocious *asura* (demon), a king among the demons, who lorded it over the demi-gods and greedily hoarded his material wealth. In his atheistic pride, Hiranyakasipu denied the power and omniscience of Lord Visnu, presuming himself to be greater even than God. Hiranyakasipu approached Lord Brahma to make him immortal, but not even Lord Brahma is immortal, so he could only grant the demon the next best thing: Hiranyakasipu would not be killed by man or beast, at night or day, on the ground or in the air, inside or outside his palace, or by any weapon.

Hiranyakasipu's son was unlike his father in every respect. A pure, young devotee of the Lord, Prahlada Maharaja received initiation as a Vaisnava while still in the womb. At the age of five, Prahlada Maharaja became a cause of great embarrassment, envy, and anger for his demon father, when Hiranyakasipu learned that his son had been preaching among his age mates as to the greatness and omnipotence of the Lord. Despite his father's efforts to remove him from the influence of the Vaisnavas, Prahlada Maharaja's devotion remained unwavering. Hiranyakasipu terrorized his own son and in his anger even sought to have him killed. But no matter what horrible methods Hiranyakasipu's assassins devised to murder him, it seemed Prahlada Maharaja enjoyed the protection of the Lord.

Eventually the conflict culminated in an argument in which Hiranyakasipu challenged Prahlada Maharaja on the subject of the Lord's omnipresence. "If your Lord is everywhere," Hiranyakasipu taunted,

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"then where is he now? Is he here in my palace? Is he here in this pillar?" As Hiranyakasipu struck the pillar to stress his point, the pillar cracked open in a blaze of light, and out of the crack appeared the Lord himself in the fearsome form of Lord Nrsmhadeva. Half-lion, half-man (neither man nor beast), the Lord appeared just as the sun was setting (neither day nor night), and forced the demon Hiranyakasipu onto His lap (neither ground nor air) at the doorway to his palace (neither inside nor outside). Lord Nrsmhadeva then tore out the great demon's intestines with His ferocious claws (not a weapon) and placed them around His own neck as a garland.

Introduction

Hare Krishna devotees know the story of Prahlada Maharaja and his father, the great demon Hiranyakasipu, through the teachings of A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (1896–1977), the Bengali Vaisnava renunciate who founded the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON, or the Hare Krishna movement) in New York in 1965. As one of the more visibly exotic of the "new religious movements" to emerge from the countercultural era, Prabhupada's shaven-headed, saffron-robed followers once attracted public attention, and sometimes hostile public reaction, in a number of Western countries as they chanted "Hare Krishna" through city streets and sold their spiritual literature to passengers in airport terminals (Rochford 1985; Shinn 1987). The movement has experienced significant transformation in the decades since its founder died in 1977 (Rochford 2007), its brief but troubled history involving periods of both conflict and accommodation with normative society, alongside a succession of internal leadership crises, sectarian schisms, and sometimes public controversies featuring murder and child abuse (Hubner and Gruson 1988; Wolf 2004; Rochford 2011). Doubtless tempered by its forty-year "trial by fire" (Melton 1995, 276), yet having today made a tentative "peace with the world" (Rochford 2000, 179), ISKCON still defines itself as a preaching movement dedicated to spreading the teachings of Prabhupada around the world (Knott 2000; Haddon 2013a).

Drawing on participant-observation research I carried out with Hare Krishna converts in Sydney, Australia, and which extended to India as I travelled with an international contingent of Hare Krishna pilgrims to the movement's sacred centers there, this chapter explores the place of demons in Hare Krishna lived experience. I begin by establishing some key points about the nature and reality of demons as I have come to

understand them in the context of Hare Krishna cosmology. I also provide an overview of the different manifestations of demon that have tormented the Hare Krishnas during the history of their movement. Following my fieldwork itinerary, at least in part, I then spend some time describing experiences of demons in the ISKCON temple in Sydney, before relating a chance encounter I had with a real-life demon-slayer in Kuala Lumpur airport, as I waited in transit with my Australian Hare Krishna companions for our connecting flight to India. As I proceed, I conceptually situate my demons in relation to monster theory and the new anthropology of monsters announced with the publication of this volume.

Demons in Appearance and Reality

I refer to two forms of demon in this chapter. The first is the scriptural form of demon revealed in the Hare Krishna sacred texts. The story of Prahlada Maharaja and Hiranyakasipu, which I have retold in my epigraph, is the most well known and recited scriptural account of a demon among Hare Krishna devotees. When they speak of demons, this story provides a ready referent, and I use this story to the same effect here. My second form of demon is the flesh-and-blood incarnation, who assumes human form and who sometimes reveals its true demoniac nature by its evil deeds (cf. Musharbash, Chapter 1 herein), or who sometimes lurks in the dark recesses of the human heart, its presence more felt than seen.

I distinguish scriptural from anthropomorphic forms of demon on the basis of appearance only, for in Hare Krishna demonology both are in fact different manifestations of the same species of (nonhuman) being. Appearances can be deceiving. This maxim applies with particular force to the Hare Krishna worldview, which dismisses the human mind and body and the material world we presume to inhabit as products of the same surface illusion (*maya*), and which accepts the scriptural accounts of Krishna's eternal "transcendental pastimes" (*lila*)—including his demon-slaying exploits—as literal descriptions of a transcendental reality. In this cosmological context, the scriptural form of demon is real, and the demon in anthropomorphic guise is a temporal manifestation of the true, original form of demon described in the sacred texts.

In Hare Krishna terms, these two forms of demon are in reality "non-different," and as such their relationship cannot be understood allegorically. Thus to say, as I have, that a demon in human form *reveals* its true demoniacal nature by its evil deeds is very different, indeed the precise inverse, from saying that a human is *attributed* metaphoric demoniacal status because of its evil deeds (cf. Musharbash, Chapter 1 herein). This is

a critical point to bear in mind in reading this chapter, for some of the demons which Hare Krishna devotees experience and talk about may appear, to the uninitiated, to be ("in reality") all too human. By contrast, my understanding of these demons aligns with the anthropological perspective on monsters introduced by Musharbash: a perspective which firmly resists the tendency in monster theory to treat monsters as mere metaphors or as "imaginary beings that *stand for* something else" (Musharbash, Chapter 1 herein,), the unquestioned assumption being that this "something else" is something human. My research has given me cause to question this assumption.

Demons in Scriptural Form

Prabhupada's voluminous translations and teachings on the Vaisnava scriptures—or more precisely, the ritual processes of reading and reciting these sacred texts—are the primary means by which Western converts to Krishna come gradually to know, experience, and inhabit a new cosmos, populated by a panoply of spiritual beings both godly and demoniac (Haddon 2013b).

These sacred stories are treated as literal descriptions of "the spiritual world" and its inhabitants. They are not metaphor or allegory, which means they cannot be interpreted in the "materialistic" terms of human experience. More than that, devotees understand that these stories themselves emanate from the spiritual world, as *sabda-brahman*—transcendentally empowered sound-images—sonic or textual incarnations of the very beings and events they describe (Beck 1992). In this sense, these sacred stories are *themselves* spiritual beings, and indeed devotees treat them as such, paying them all due ritual deference in any given context of their recitation. This is why I can say, without falling into allegory, that the very act of reciting these stories is also a way of inhabiting a spiritual cosmos, populated by demons and demi-gods and Krishna's manifold manifestations.

The scriptural form of demon must therefore be radically distinguished from the textual form of monster that populates the pages of monster theory. In Cohen's terms, "the monster exists only to be read . . . Like a letter on the page, the monster signifies something other than itself" (Cohen 1996, 4). This kind of semiotic interpretation simply cannot apply to the demon in scriptural form, because the ontology of the sacred text collapses the very distinction between signifier and signified: Strictly speaking, the "letter on the page" of the demon-story is itself an incarnation of demon.

This mantric ontology informs almost every aspect of Hare Krishna ritual practice. When devotees chant the Holy Names of the Lord ("*Hare Krishna*, *Hare Krishna* . . ."), for instance, they know that Krishna himself dances upon the tongue of the chanter and in the ears of the listener (Haddon 2013a). Drawing on this same ontology of sacred language, devotees recite stories about Krishna as a ritual means of self-realization, as a mnemonic technique of recovering the true form (*svarupa*) of the self, the spirit-soul, which we have all forgotten due to our illusory identification with the human body and mind and this material world (Haddon 2013b). These sacred stories invariably feature Lord Krishna himself appearing in one of his many incarnations (*avatara*), but demons (*asura*) also have a special part to play in these appearances. Indeed, it is the role of the demon in these stories to be slain by Krishna. For with each demon he slays, the Lord reveals a different aspect of his unrevealable totality.

The fearsome demon-slayer, Lord Nrsmhadeva, who appears in the story of Prahlada Maharaja and Hiranyakasipu, is an *avatara*, an incarnation of Lord Krishna. In appearance (though certainly not in ontology), Nrsmhadeva fits precisely the category-defying category of the "monster" as introduced by Musharbash (Chapter 1 herein): half-lion, half-man, Nrsmhadeva is a grotesque hybrid who appears in twilight and attacks from the interstices of space to disembowel his victim. But Lord Nrsmhadeva is not a monster (cf. Mitter, cited in Musharbash, Chapter 1 herein). Nor is he a "monstrous God" in Kearney's sense (2003, 6; see also Morton, Chapter 5 herein). He is God, in monstrous form. The child-devotee Prahlada Maharaja does not fear this monstrous hierophany: Prahlada sees only his beloved Lord. It is the child's demon tormenter, the atheist Hiranyakasipu, who is struck with terror as his flesh-and-blood mortality is exposed and eviscerated. Lord Nrsmhadeva is the protector of the devotees. For Krishna's devotees, Nrsmhadeva's monstrous appearance instills not fear but fearlessness. It reinforces their faith that the Lord will appear even in life's darkest corners, wherever demons dwell.

The sacred texts show demons in their true, original form (*svarupa*), as spiritual beings with their own appearance, their own names, their own personalities, and their own special part to play in the *lila* or "transcendental pastimes" of Lord Krishna. As a part of Krishna's eternal *lila*, demons transcend historical time. And yet—as is the case for all spirit-souls whose transmigratory existence spans vast temporal cycles of birth and rebirth—demons can assume different temporal manifestations as appropriate to a given epoch. It is in this temporal and cosmological context that I now proceed to describe the human incarnation of demon in more detail.

Demons in Human Form

Questions about the appearance and reality of demons become especially complicated when we put them in the context of lived historical experience. Demons appear to have taken on different human incarnations even over the course of the Hare Krishna movement's brief history. In this section I introduce four anthropomorphic manifestations of demon that have tormented the Hare Krishnas: the demon "outsider," inner demons or "demons of the heart," the "fallen" guru, and (closely related to the previous category) the child abuser.

The Demon-Outsider

When Rochford first began researching the Hare Krishnas in North America in 1975, when this new religious movement was still very much in its formative stage of development, converts commonly used the term "demon" to refer to anyone who was an "outsider" or a potential threat to their newly found religious convictions (2000, 179). This "demonizing" rhetoric is perhaps typical of new religious movements classified by sociologists as "world rejecting" (Wallis 1984), and the fact that the Hare Krishna movement was itself "demonized" as a dangerous cult by anti-cult activists and a hostile media only served to reinforce this sense of rejection (Shinn 1987). The opposition between devotee-insiders and demon-outsiders was further enforced by a strict communal ideal, which demanded that all new converts live "inside" one of the movement's temple or farm communities and abandon affective ties with the "outside" world, often even with their own families (Rochford 2000).

Today, however, the demon-outsider appears to have retreated almost altogether from the Hare Krishna life-world. If the demon-outsider once thrived on a kind of oppositional identity-thinking which sustained its demoniacal power as a "limit-experience for [devotee] humans trying to identify themselves over and against others" (Kearney 2003, 3), I suspect it (not unlike many of the social theories that once thrived on the same kind of thinking) may have been simply deprived of sustenance. The tentative peace that the Hare Krishnas have made with the world, which is largely a consequence of generational changes that have seen the majority of Hare Krishna families and members living, working, and worshipping "outside" of the so-called communal boundaries of a temple or ashram, has also deprived the demon-outsider of its exclusive haunting grounds. As Rochford puts it, from "a dichotomous world of virtuous devotees and ignorant and sinful demons has emerged one defined by shades of gray, and the blurring of insider and outsider distinctions" (2000, 179).

Yet demons still haunt the Hare Krishnas. They have just found new ways of tormenting devotees with their maleficent intent and wreaking their devastation.

Demons of the Heart

Today, when devotees speak of demons they are more likely to refer to their "demons of the heart," the personal obstacles or misgivings they must continually strive to overcome in the pursuit of self-realization, rather than to any external societal threat to their movement.

These inner demons reveal their presence in the form of doubts and fears, occasionally as compulsive or addictive behaviors, perhaps most often in the form of sexual urges. There is no shortage of sustenance for these demons. Just like Hiranyakasipu, all of these demons seek to lure devotees away from the spiritual path to Krishna back to this degraded, illusory world of material sensory desire. These are the forms of demon I encountered most often during my fieldwork and, accordingly, they feature predominantly in my ethnographic account.

Were I tempted at this point to pick up the tools of monster theory, I could readily interpret these demons as metaphoric "tokens of fracture within the human psyche," as "paranoid illusions [which] serve the purpose of making sense of . . . confused emotions by externalizing them into black-and-white scenarios" (Kearney 2003, 4). This type of analysis is comforting, perhaps even therapeutic, for those of us who cannot cope with the prospect of a divine or demoniacal otherworld that might exist, not beyond, but independently of the human imagination (cf. Kearney 2003). This type of analysis is a form of demon-slaying in its own right, in the sense that it can only examine the demon specimen by first killing it and pinning it to the disinfected dissecting table of secular social theory, the post-mortem report invariably finding the nonhuman to be truly human after all. Of course, this is only metaphoric demon-slaying, for it does not actually touch demons at all (how can it, when it does not accept their existence as anything but metaphor, belief, or paranoid projection?), and it does nothing to help humans who are tormented by demons in their everyday lives.

Here I must reiterate the critical point I have stressed throughout: Devotees do not speak of demons metaphorically, and nor do I treat them as such. To say, as I have, that demons *reveal* their presence in the form of affective states, psychological disorders, or sexual desire is very different, indeed the precise inverse, to saying that demons are *themselves* the psychosocial symptoms or externalized "black-and-white" representations of these all-too-human experiences. Monster theory might be able to slay

the latter form of demon (in the same way that secular Western philosophy once pronounced the death of God), but it cannot touch the former. Only Lord Krishna can slay real demons, because *demons only exist for Lord Krishna to slay*.

This perspective is of critical relevance to the most maleficent of the anthropomorphic demons that I have encountered during my research. These demons have made their appearance in the scandals and sectarian debates which have internally torn the Hare Krishna movement apart over the decades, and which have implicated a number of senior leaders in demoniacal activities including egomania, sex, embezzlement, drug-taking, murder, and child abuse.

The Fallen

The sordid history of ISKCON's "fallen" gurus has been quite well documented both within ISKCON and by observers of the movement (Rochford 1985, 221–55; 1989; 1998; 2011; Shinn 1987, 50–60; Hubner and Gruson 1988; Goswami 1998, 283–346; W. H. Deadwyler 2004; Haddon, 2014). In the decades since the death of ISKCON's founder in 1977, nearly every one of the eleven "spiritual masters" personally appointed by Prabhupada as his successors—as gurus in their own right with the power to initiate disciples into the *parampara*, the transcendentally empowered line of "disciplic succession" leading ultimately back to Lord Krishna himself—has "fallen down" due to spiritual (often enough sexual, sometimes criminal) transgressions. The existential stakes involved in these succession crises have been high indeed, both for the individual disciples who depend on their guru for salvation, and for the future of ISKCON. Widespread apostasy, schism, and group defection are some of the impacts still reverberating through the movement today (Rochford 1989; 2009; Haddon, 2014).

Dark stories proliferate among Hare Krishna devotees about fallen gurus. These stories serve as a continual reminder to devotees that the most baleful of demons do not threaten the Hare Krishna movement from without, but infiltrate it from within. Indeed, the circulation of scandalous stories concerning these infamous figures is one of the more powerful narrative processes by which devotees today come to know and define the dark side of a religious life-world which has otherwise become defined, as Rochford puts it, by blurred distinctions and shades of gray (Rochford 2000, 179).

Fallen gurus come in different shades on the demonological gray scale. In less serious cases, their spiritual transgressions can be attributed to the

same kind of inner demons with whom all devotees must contend. For the *brahmacaryis*—the young male celibates—I stayed with in the ISKCON temple in Sydney, for whom the struggle to maintain celibacy seemed to be almost synonymous with the process of spiritual advancement itself, the sordid history of ISKCON's fallen gurus served as a potent reminder that even the most advanced of devotees can be struck down in their prime by powerful sexual demons.

The demonological diagnosis is far more serious, however, when spiritual transgressions extend to matters like child abuse and murder. In the more extreme allegations that circulate among devotees, particularly through the unofficial channels of communication facilitated by online Hare Krishna forums, fallen gurus appear not as *victims* of demoniacal influence, but as *themselves* "maha-demons" or "great demons" whose inherently evil nature is revealed in the form of hypersexuality, pedophilia, murder and, in perhaps the darkest of all scenarios, in patricide—by way of the conspiratorial murder by poison of ISKCON's beloved founder Srila Prabhupada.

To my knowledge, this poisoning conspiracy has never been granted any serious recognition among mainstream devotees or the current ISKCON leadership, though it could certainly be interpreted as a symptom of the poisonous atmosphere generated within ISKCON in the wake of the fallen gurus controversies and which has produced a number of splinter groups and some very embittered individuals. By contrast, the issue of child abuse has been taken seriously by the current ISKCON leadership, particularly after a major law suit was filed against the organization in Dallas, Texas, and after victims and advocates finally succeeded in bringing the issue into the light of day within the movement (Wolf 2004; Rochford 2007, 73–95). In this contentious context, demons have once again manifested from within the Hare Krishna movement, particularly amid a furor of rumors and allegations that certain fallen gurus were either perpetrators or accessories to the abuse.

The Child Abuser

It is now well established that the strictly ascetic communal lifestyle that defined ISKCON's formative period "led to the abuse and neglect of women and children" (Rochford 2007, 7; Muster 2004). With a lack of any supportive structure for families, many children were separated from their parents and raised in *gurukulas* (boarding schools) under the supervision of inexperienced and often resentful minders (G. Deadwyler 2004; Wolf 2004; Rochford 2007, 73–95). The structural conditions were thus set for the demon child abuser to infiltrate the Hare Krishna movement.

"For many ISKCON children, who were raised in an atmosphere of oppression and fear, exacerbated by prolonged separation from their parents, a common experience of childhood in the boarding school . . . was one of terror and entrapment" (Wolf 2004, 324). Wolf's description of the experience in the *gurukulas* of the 1970s and 1980s is supported by the personal accounts of devotees and former devotees who were raised in ISKCON during this period (e.g. G. Deadwyler 2004). Rochford (2007, 74–95) and has also recorded testimonies of physical and sexual abuse, and the ISKCON leadership has engaged Rochford as an independent consultant in its efforts to investigate the issue. ISKCON has initiated a range of public, if limited, measures to retrospectively address this issue, including the provision of opportunities for victim testimony and funding victim support services.

Child abuse tests the limits of cultural relativism and the methodological agnosticism often associated with the anthropology of religion (La Fontaine 1990). Whether we are dealing with indigenous cultures or religious cults, even the most liberal minded of anthropologists can entertain different cultural practices and religious beliefs only up to a point. In the final analysis, child abuse is real, demons are not. Child abuse is repugnant, and so is the very thought of persisting with an apologetic analysis that would remove child sexual abuse "from the hard, empirical world of criminology and deviance to a mystical realm of holy unknowing" (Scheper-Hughes and Devine 2003, 23).

I am not prepared to wade into this highly charged moral debate, although I can offer one important ethnographic observation. Precisely the same moral debate is being waged within the Hare Krishna movement itself in relation to its history of child abuse. Devotees have applied different interpretative frames—more or less secular, more or less religious—to their understanding of these crises. Should child sex abusers, widely reviled as the *real monsters* of contemporary Western society, be admitted as "sinful demons" into the essentially sacred categories of Hare Krishna demonology? Or should they be cast out completely from Hare Krishna cosmology to the profane categories of human socio-pathology? What kind of truth and what kind of reconciliation do these different interpretations offer victims in particular, and what do they offer the Hare Krishna movement more generally in its attempts to come to terms with this history?

Humans can be monsters, and we could legitimately deploy a range of analytic concepts to sociologize or psychopathologize the monstrosity of child abuse in the Hare Krishna movement. But such powerful metaphors, as they are, do not displace the experiences of devotees themselves in their demonological framing of this issue. Conversely, invoking "demons"

does not preclude an empirical illumination of the "dark corners" of institutional authority which facilitate abuse (cf. Scheper-Hughes and Devine 2003, 23). To the contrary, such monstrous truths can be held to account against a potentially more powerful religious truth. This does not mean surrendering human judgment or denying the possibility of ethical action in this worldly realm. Deviants, monsters, and criminals can all be exposed to the harsh light of secular interrogation. But I venture that wherever there are demons, that is where Krishna the demon-slayer is sure to make his most awesome appearance.

Ethnographic Demon-Stories

It remains to describe the complex reality of demons ethnographically, as a real and sometimes bitter lived experience for Hare Krishna devotees, which requires that I enter into that dark otherworld where demons dwell. I offer two stories based on my fieldwork experience. The first is intended to provide an insight into the everyday lived experience of "demons of the heart" and comes from my time as participant-observer in the ISKCON temple in Sydney. The second is an account of the appearance of the demon-slayer Lord Nrsmhadeva in the response of a now adult child abuse victim to his experience of abuse. I offer this second story not so much as a conclusion, but as a narrative reflection on some of the more contentious conceptual issues I have raised in this chapter concerning the reality of demons.

Earlier I reflected upon the revelatory force that empowers the scriptural accounts of Krishna's demon-slaying exploits. Ethnographic storytelling may not be able to harness this sacred force, but it can at least hold a place for demons as nonhuman actors inhabiting, haunting, manipulating, and affecting a world of human actors who in turn inhabit, haunt, manipulate, and affect a world of demons. As a form of "narrative interpretation" (Kearney 2003, 10) ethnographic storytelling offers a powerful alternative to the kind of demon-slaying analysis that I earlier associated with monster theory: the kind of analysis that would deny demons of any life outside of symbolism or fantasy, and that by extension would deny any life and power to the demon-slaying God.

Demons Within

Bhakta Jack can tell a good story. Jack has been around the Australian Hare Krishna scene for more than twenty years, having first encountered the devotees in his late twenties while living and working in Los Angeles.

Jack was my guide and principal instructor in the rituals and everyday practices of Krishna Consciousness during my stay as a participant-observer at the ISKCON temple in Sydney. As "temple commander" he was responsible for much of the day-to-day upkeep of the temple and men's ashram. Most days, after completing our early morning cycle of rituals and prayers, and when the younger *bhaktas* (male devotees) from the ashram would head out into the streets "on the pick" (soliciting funds from the public), I would assist Jack in his various chores and errands about the temple and listen to his stories.

It was Jack who first told me about the place of demons in today's world according to the Vedic cosmology of time and space. In the time of the *Satya-yuga*, the first and most pious of the cosmic cyclical Ages, when people walked the planet like demi-gods, demons inhabited different worlds to people. In the next of the cosmic Ages, *Treta-yuga*, demons lived on the same planet but in separate countries to people, and demons and humans waged battles like warring nations. In the next Age, *Dvapara-yuga*, demons and humans lived in the same country, with the demons stirring strife and conflict from within. In *Kali-yuga*, this present and most degraded of Ages, when the human form is at its weakest, demons are not even separate entities to humans, but inhabit the one person.

Jack imparted lessons like this one to me freely and often, and I cannot recall the precise context in which I received this particular lesson in ISKCON demonology. It might have been as we drove in the temple van down to the local hardware store for supplies, or as we washed dishes together in the temple kitchen. Jack often evoked military imagery in his storytelling, drawing on the image of Krishna the charioteer instructing the warrior prince Arjuna upon the battlefield of Kuruksetra in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, more so than on the frolicking cowherd boy who appears in the Eighteenth Canto of the *Bhagavata-Purana*. Jack taught me that Srila Prabhupada, the revered founder of the Hare Krishna movement, was a *senapati bhakta*—a "great General" who commanded a global army of devotees against the demoniac forces of the world, and in our conversations it appeared that this cosmic battle was being waged in almost every aspect of Jack's day-to-day existence.

Jack wears the white robes of a *grhastha* (a married householder), even though his wife and children left him years ago and no longer affiliate with ISKCON. Now he shares a spartan room in the ashram at the Sydney temple with a much younger group of neophyte devotees who wear the saffron robes of *brahmacaryis* (male celibate students). Despite all his years as a devotee, Jack has never taken formal initiation by a spiritual master (hence he is still "Jack," as only initiates receive a Sanskrit name). He says he has never found a spiritual master to whom he could submit himself

totally, as is demanded of a disciple, but that has not diminished his personal devotion to Krishna. I felt the intensity of Jack's commitment in the way he delivered his sermons to me, his ethnographer-disciple, at every opportunity and with a gestural urgency that seemed somehow to situate the lesson itself (in the car, in the kitchen, or wherever we happened to be) in the thick of an unfolding cosmic war. But this is a difficult existential state to maintain, being on a constant spiritual war-footing, and I also learned (mostly from others) that Jack is one of those devotees whose devotion comes in waves: Jack's spiritual energy runs high during his stints at the temple, but then after a period of intense exposure he eventually gets "fried" and will leave the temple, only to return again at some later point for spiritual recharging. Where Jack goes during his low periods I do not know, though once I saw him wandering the streets, bleary-eyed and alone, in a different part of the city, looking that night as though his inner demons may have just defeated him.

This pattern is not uncommon among Hare Krishna devotees: the waxing and waning of devotional affect, the fluctuating temporalities which belie the redemptive before-and-after narrative of "conversion," but which nevertheless subtend a *telos* of their own, as inevitable obstacles encountered along the path to self-realization and ultimate salvation. When preaching, devotees will often promote the spiritual life as an easy process, as the joyous cultivation of *bhakti* (love of God) through singing, dancing, storytelling, and feasting. But in more personal contexts they will also admit that the life of devotion is a fraught and difficult undertaking, a constant struggle against material identification with the mind and body, a continual confrontation with one's own "demons of the heart." To cultivate faith one must work persistently to clear away these personal obstacles and misgivings, these *anarthas* or inner demons.

While devotees understand the temple is a transcendental space, a sovereign "embassy of the spiritual world" subscribing to its own cosmological laws in the midst of this unruly material world, devotees also described the temple in Sydney in more mundane terms—as a hospital, a psychiatric ward, a train station. In this sense, the temple might be said to offer devotees temporary spiritual asylum, but in the end it is not an "alternative mini-world, sufficiently removed from the big one outside so that its perils are kept away from the gate" (Cox 1977, 105). Temple walls cannot keep out the demons inhabiting one's own heart.

I never probed into Jack's demons. I was content to take Jack's war stories at face value, as a running commentary on his own struggle writ large in a conflict of cosmic proportions. Some devotees can name their inner demons, or else they can point to the maleficent workings of demons in others. Drug and alcohol addiction, mental illness, and even

homelessness were identified as playing a part in the struggles of a few of the transient residents coming and going through the doors of the Sydney temple. But it would be wrong to present these individual stories as representative of some generic narrative of conversion to Krishna Consciousness. As Shinn rightly points out, there are "as many different conversion stories and timetables as there [are] devotees" in ISKCON (Shinn 1987, 131), and certainly the devotees at the Sydney temple did not all come to Krishna Consciousness looking for a religious remedy for pre-existing pathologies. Even those that come with prior problems soon learn that the life of devotion is not simpler or easier than life without Krishna. On the contrary, devotional life demands a high degree of determination and self-discipline, and I would argue that the existential stakes of life are only increased when they are hinged upon the promise and possibility of self-transformation and eternal salvation within a new and vastly expanded cosmos. The pursuit of a higher consciousness can open up new horizons, but it also presents its own hazards. Demons exert their own existential demands and must be dealt with on their own terms. Bhakta Jack's twenty years in and out of ISKCON testify to this.

The Appearance of Lord Nrshmadeva

My second story relates a chance encounter I had with a second generation devotee, a thirty-year-old man who was born into ISKCON with the name Tarakara dasa, but who introduced himself to me as David. Our brief meeting took place as we were both in transit in Kuala Lumpur airport.

I was travelling with a small group of neophyte devotees from Sydney on our way to Mayapur, West Bengal, for the annual Gaura Purnima festival, which attracts thousands of Hare Krishna pilgrims from all over the world. My travelling companions were three young *bhaktas* (male students) and one young *mataji* (female devotee) who had earned their passage for the pilgrimage over the preceding year through their tireless fundraising efforts and devotional service. This was their first trip to India, and it presented a daunting test of devotion.

David, as it turned out, was on his way back from Mayapur on his return leg home to the United States. He was not a returning pilgrim, however, and this was not his first trip to Mayapur. He had just travelled there to present his personal testimony to an ISKCON-funded hearing on child abuse within the movement.

It was David's printed white T-shirt that stood out to me against the backdrop of a steadily growing crowd of transiting Hare Krishna pilgrims from around the world, dressed for the most part in the saffron robes

of *brahmacaryis* (male celibate students) and chanting quietly among themselves. The image on the front of his T-shirt depicted a large ferocious looking claw, drawn to appear as if it were tearing through the fabric of the shirt from the insides of the wearer, replete with broken rib cage and bright red blood stains splattered around the surrounding white fabric.

"I like your T-shirt," was my salutation, and the opportunity was opened for David to introduce himself by way of a story about his T-shirt iconography.

"Do you know the story of Prahlada Maharaja and Nrsmhadeva?" quizzed David, which of course by that stage of my fieldwork I knew well, but I was happy to hear it again. "Lord Nrsmhadeva is the protector of the devotees." And so David invoked his beloved Protector, who saved the pure young devotee of the Lord, Prahlada Maharaja, by slaying the great demon Hiranyakasipu.

David had printed the T-shirt himself, specifically for the occasion of the child abuse hearing in Mayapur, where he had been invited to present his testimony as a victim of physical child abuse during his time as a student at the Mayapur *gurukula* (a boarding school for devotee children). David also wore his T-shirt the day after the hearing, as he searched out and confronted the perpetrator of his abuse. David found his abuser walking the paths of the Mayapur *gurukula*, aided by a walking stick, and engrossed in conversation with another older devotee. David confronted his abuser and demanded he confess to the abuse, but the abuser refused to listen and even made light of the accusation. Infuriated, David grabbed the walking stick out of his abuser's hand and beat him repeatedly to the ground.

David told me this story only two days after the event. On his return home to the United States, David immediately posted a comment on an open online Hare Krishna forum detailing the same version of events, knowing he had already spoken to me and that potentially competing versions of the story would already be spreading among devotees once I arrived in Mayapur. He wanted the record set straight. The post has since been entered into a chronological record of child abuse cases and responses to these cases maintained by Hare Krishna child protection advocates. David also told me during our brief meeting that he no longer identifies with ISKCON. He does, however, consider himself a devotee of Krishna.

This encounter has given me much to reflect upon as I have sought to reconcile the history of scandal and abuse in the Hare Krishna movement with the experiences of devotees who, despite everything and with a highly reflexive understanding and sometimes direct experience of this history themselves, nonetheless see and experience a divinely nonhuman influence at work in the surface activity of human intention and action.

Surely I was in the right place at the right time for such a revelation. Here I was, a participant-observer (neither inside nor outside) in transit in an airport (neither in the air nor on the ground, so to speak) in another time zone (neither day nor night), travelling with a group of neophyte "insiders" who were just embarking on their first foray into the wider world of Krishna Consciousness, and meeting a young man who was already well on his way "outside" the Hare Krishna movement—especially so after seriously assaulting a senior devotee with his own walking stick (not a weapon)—and yet who despite all his terrible experiences in ISKCON continues to invoke the most fearsome form of Lord Krishna as his protector.

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Chapter 8

Ghosts and the Everyday Politics of Race in Fiji

Geir Henning Presterudstuen

One early morning during a fieldwork trip to Fiji's old capital, Levuka, in 2009, I was dragged from a deep, kava-induced sleep by loud banging on the door of the rented cabin I shared with one of my friends and respondents, Ajay.[1] "Hello, hello," someone shouted, and as our visitor did not relent, Ajay reluctantly got up to answer the door while I turned around to go back to sleep. After a brief discussion with the visitor at the door, Ajay called me to come and sort the matter out. The visitor turned out to be a young, pretty, Fijian girl. Judging by her sleepy eyes and slurred speech, I figured that she must have spent the previous night much like I had—chatting and drinking *yaqona*[2] (kava) followed by a complimentary "washdown," that is the two or three long-necks of cold Fiji Bitter beer that many young Fijians consider the natural way to finish off a "grog session."

When I somewhat brusquely asked her what she wanted at that time of the night, she introduced herself as Judy and repeatedly explained that she was looking for her cousin who lived in the cabin. It took me several explanations and, in the end, a rather stern telling off before she eventually, quite meekly, accepted that she had mistaken our commercially rented cabin with her cousin's house, and left. While I initially did not think much of the situation and was eager to get back to bed, I was surprised to find my friend, who was Fijian-born of Indo-Fijian heritage, visibly upset. Breathing a sigh of relief, he turned to me and exclaimed, "Thank God you made her go away . . . I've been told many times that it is so important not to be friendly or inviting when a ghost visits you, because then you will never get rid of them." It appeared that I had just experienced a Fijian ghost first-hand.

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Over the next few hours we continued to talk about the situation, and how it could be that what to me appeared like a tired, doped, and confused, but profoundly human, young girl, was so clearly a ghost to my friend. And why had the ghost emerged this particular night and at this particular location? This experience and our subsequent discussion about what it meant to us respectively—me a white, anthropological fieldworker visiting Fiji and Ajay, an Australian-based Indo-Fijian revisiting his land of birth as a tourist—spurred my sustained interest in ghosts and spirits in Fiji. It became clear that ghosts, their emergence and workings, were deeply intertwined with Fijian ontologies, identity politics, and national narratives. Put differently, the existence of ghosts is connected to particular ways of being as well as particular ways of seeing, or perceiving one's place in the world.

While this remains my only first-hand experience with a Fijian ghost, I had previously heard a number of stories about nightly visits from what was perceived as ghosts in various Fijian locations. My own encounter made me take these accounts more seriously, and I started to entertain the idea that there was a case for approaching the relationship between Fijian spirituality, tradition, and ghosts analytically. In 2009, I began to document in earnest stories about ghosts during my fieldwork in western Viti Levu and the island of Ovalau, and I later added others that emerged in personal communications with friends from Fiji or from secondary sources.

While ghosts often emerge in contemporary popular culture as de-territorialized, de-historicized, and universal metaphors for social change and late-modern fluidity (Luckhurst 2002), Fijian ghosts are intrinsically linked to their socio-cultural setting and particular discourses about tradition and modernity (cf. Bubandt 2012 on similar dynamics in Indonesia). For most citizens of Fiji they also remain real, social beings whose existence is rarely disputed because their impacts on people's everyday lives are both commonly known and often talked about as significant. Their presence is typically interpreted in terms of a Fijian political narrative, where race is a pervasive analytic, and is frequently used to justify and explain socio-spatial borders based on racial and ethnic categories. However, ghosts are also undeniably products of their specific historical setting. As they emerge and reemerge in changing political and social contexts, they change shape, complexion, and meaning, reflecting the shifting ideological paradigms of the people they haunt or protect. In my analysis I pay particular attention to how ghosts and spirits have become conflated concepts that are understood to demarcate and police the borders between dichotomies like Fijian/non-Fijian, past/present, and traditional/modern, as well as utilized discursively to make sense of changing historical and social circumstances in Fiji.

The ubiquity of ghost stories, here understood in the widest sense as any narrative that involves encounters with or knowledge about ghosts, combined with the readiness with which my respondents would resort to them in order to explain a variety of experiences, made it clear to me that they were an important discursive genre through which Fiji Islanders made sense of their immediate world and dramatized certain aspects of their lives. While, for some, ghosts arguably remained more symbolic representations of inexplicable events or sensations rather than tangible beings, I do not mean to imply that they were necessarily entirely the products of my respondents' imagination. In this vein, the ghost Ajay was convinced we encountered in Levuka was undeniably "there." Indeed, while my focus will largely be on my respondents' ghost *stories*, my key interest lies in the way people's experiences with ghosts shaped my respondents' social relations and had real impacts on their everyday lives.

In this chapter I draw upon these ethnographic insights to discuss ghosts and spirits as important players in everyday struggles for power and authority in present-day Fiji. Using mine and Ajay's experience in Levuka as a starting point for my analysis, I will discuss how ghosts have an ambiguous presence in Fijian society. It is their origin in pre-modern Fijian mythologies, as "root gods," or ancestral spirits, that makes their presence in contemporary society feasible. They are considered intrinsic to the land and deeply connected to ethno-Fijian tradition and moral discourses (see Onnudottir, Chapter 11, herein, for a discussion of the relationship between luminal beings and the land in another ethnographic context—Iceland). At the same time they sit uneasily in the modern, Christian sphere, and when they emerge they are usually considered both threatening and unwelcome.

Writing about monsters across American history, W. Scott Poole contends that they "have a way of becoming real" because they are inextricably entwined with attitudes and social structures that make them possible (2011, 107). Utilizing these ideas in my analysis, I propose that Fijian ghosts are made possible through a Fijian political orthodoxy that is at once underpinned by a particular construction of Fijian tradition and spirituality as well as a legal-rational system overtly based on racial categorization. Second, I argue that ghosts in turn, and somewhat paradoxically, are used to make the consequences of racial categories discursively real and true in everyday life situations. To make these connections clear from the outset, however, it is necessary to step back into Fijian history to understand how the concepts of ancestral spirits came to be conflated with the notion of ghosts in contemporary Fiji.

Spirits, Ghosts, and Fijian Tradition

Ancestral spirits and ghosts have always been prominent in the indigenous Fijian pantheon, folklore, and everyday beliefs. Pre-modern Fijians had an elaborate set of practices and polytheistic beliefs going back at least several centuries before the arrival of missionaries (Derrick [1946] 2008). Known as the *qaravi Kalou vu*, they are associated with ancestral and animal spirits that included a creation story, formalized rituals, and designated places of worship. Early colonial records showed both the prominence and complexity of these beliefs:

> It is impossible to ascertain even the probable number of the gods of Fiji; for disembodied spirits are called gods, and are regarded as such. But the natives make a distinction between those who were gods originally, and those who are only deified spirits. The former they call *Kalou-vu* (root-gods), the latter *Kalou-yalo* (deified mortals). Of the former class the number is great; but the latter are without number.
>
> (Waterhouse 1854, 42–44)

In this taxonomy of spiritual life, the *kalou vu* were the foundational gods, powerful and omnipresent in the land, whom Fijians called upon to gain strength or receive blessings. The *kalou yalo* were the spirits of certain mortals with particular supernatural qualities or close connection with the godly realm. In contemporary Fiji, both concepts are generally conflated with imported notions of ghosts and, if unambiguously evil, *tevoro* (demons), a point I return to later in my analysis. Such conceptual slippage is perhaps related to how these beings, in traditional beliefs, were always difficult to classify and define. They could take on many shapes, including that of regular men or women, and they were a common, albeit unwanted, presence in villages understood to be intrinsic to the land. As such they could be good and evil, functional or annoying. While they generally made their presence felt through small pranks or mischief, their intrinsic cultural power was always acknowledged and feared (Thomson 1895). They were frequently blamed for illness, insanity, as well as failed crops and droughts, but were also involved in the general social control of village life; they could reportedly "steal the spirits" of disobedient children as well as punish those showing disrespect toward the chiefly office or elders (Derrick [1946] 2008, 15).

Despite their supernatural power and occasional sinister actions, all these *kalou* were generally considered godly rather than monstrous in pre-modern Fiji. These beings disappeared from official records and vacated their prominent place in ritual and social life with the introduction

of Christianity in the mid-1800s. Colonial writers as well as the newly converted local elite generally dismissed the continuing importance of these beings. They were often described as merely part of a distant past "so long ago that the tradition has become dim" (Thomson 1895, 351). It is clear, however, that many elements of this tradition were carried over into modernized Fijian social structure and traces are still visible in Fijian social practice and everyday mythologies today. Most notable of these is perhaps the ritual drinking of *yaqona*, which remains integral to Fijian ceremonial and official occasions both in villages and in modern political settings. While *yaqona* as a cultural entity remains associated with pre-modern practices and, in certain instances, witchcraft and demons (Tomlinson 2006), it is believed to possess certain ritual properties which makes it a cultural symbol deemed inalienable from Fijian authority. The ritual presentation of *yaqona* is crucial to add effectiveness and validity to any discourse in contemporary Fiji despite its obvious links to pre-modern spirituality, and is as such a key example of how the old ways were never totally eradicated. Similarly, the *kalou vu* is commonly talked about in many village settings as an important reference point for both personal and communal identities, as it represents specific ancestral spirits to which practically every indigenous Fijian can trace their origin based on their *mataqali* (the organizational unit, best translated as clan, which is the most common unit for land ownership and social organization) (Ravuvu 1987), and many Fijians are considered *vaka-yalo*, translated as having spiritual prowess.

It is clear that while Christianization led to the practically total removal of the traditional veneration of ancestral and animalistic gods as well as the physical demolition of their places of worship, it did not completely obliterate the pre-modern pantheon of ancestral spirits. Rather, it relegated them to a position, spiritually as well as physically, beneath the modern, Christian God. For many Fijians, they remain a part of the larger Fijian cosmology, and have the ability to influence many aspects of society, from the political to the everyday realm.

A crucial point that underpins these dynamics is that deities, as well as chiefs and other traditionally perceived authorities, derive their efficacy from devotees' attendance to them. The older gods and ancestral spirits, then, were not so much eradicated by the introduction of Christianity, as becoming non-active because they were no longer subject to Fijians' attention and sacrifices to them. As Toren puts it, "the Christian God is invoked not as 'the only god', but as 'the only god who is served'" (1995, 166). During my fieldwork I found that this cultural logic was often inversed in order to literally demonize immoral actions and thoughts. My respondents often explained how failure to serve the chief or God, and by extension failure to do the right thing according to Fijian hegemonic notions

of tradition, could potentially invoke bad spirits. Similarly, people insisted that excessive *yaqona*-drinking or the use of *yaqona* in particular contexts, such as in the vicinity of places associated with demons or ghostly activity, could conjure up the old spirits, who can do great damage.

The continued presence of ancestral spirits includes an implicit understanding of their potential to unsettle the social order. That is, they gain *mana*, or spiritual efficacy, if they are unintentionally or intentionally attended on. The spirits can thus be invoked not only by direct worship, but also by disturbing their peace by "doing the wrong thing." This is particularly obvious in contemporary Fiji, where the distinction between "the Fijian way" and moral wrongdoing is often conflated with the racial dichotomies between Fijians and non-Fijians. In the modern sense, this notion of moral right or wrong is inherently racialized—it equates to a distinction between "Fijianness" and "non-Fijianness," categories which are at once understood and experienced ideologically, spiritually, and spatially. In this particular cultural logic spirits and ghosts emerge as indicators or markers of someone having overstepped racial boundaries as well as violated Fijian cultural norms.

During these processes of ideological and cultural change the Fijian spiritual beings have thus not disappeared, but rather become monstrous. The Christian doctrines that have moral and political hegemony in contemporary Fiji have both demonized ghosts and moved them from the village to the fringes of society. The fact that they are supernatural creatures that police racial borders and dwell "at the gates of difference" make these ghosts fit neatly in with one of the most prominent contemporary monster conceptualizations (Cohen 1996, 7–10). More importantly, their modern function as markers or omens corresponds well with the core aspect of monstrosity:

> In the ancient world, monstrosities, *monstra*, are named from an admonition, *monitus*, because they point out something by signalling or symbolizing. Clearly, from the beginnings of recorded time, monsters have been part of a semiotic culture of divination, metaphors, messages, indications of deeper meaning or inspiration.
>
> (Gilmore 2003, 9)

Still, reducing these ghosts to mere metaphors ignores the many ways their presence and nature affect my respondents' lives. Rather than dwelling on the ontological question of the existence of or nature of these ghosts, during the remainder of this chapter I analyze these dynamics, seeking to demonstrate the intrinsic connection between ghosts and the everyday constructions of race in contemporary, urban Fiji.

Ghost Stories and the Politics of Race

If we accept that all societies "get the ghosts they deserve" (Bubandt 2012, 7), it is not surprising that Fijian ghosts appear to have a pre-occupation with race as a social signifier and personal identity marker. Race has been a key organizing principle for Fijian laws, political organization, and social life since the outset of modernity. A key element of British colonial policies was the importation of indentured laborers from British India to work in the sugar industry. This was implemented in order to make the running of the colony a profitable enterprise, while at the same time protecting indigenous Fijian culture and tradition from the forces of capitalism. Between 1879 and 1916 more than sixty thousand Indians, largely from northern India, arrived in Fiji under the indenture scheme. While most of these were contracted for ten years of labor and few came with the intention of staying permanently in Fiji, only a fraction had the means to return to their homeland after completing their service (see Lal 2012 for a comprehensive account of the origin and history of Indo-Fijians). After the abolishment of the indenture system in 1916, a majority of Indian laborers remained as settlers and, together with a small number of later free migrants from Gujarat and Punjab, comprise the ancestry of today's Indo-Fijians.[3]

Throughout much of Fiji's modern history, Indo-Fijians have comprised nearly half of the total population of the Fiji islands but have been refused equal citizenship rights through a legal framework that is explicitly racialized. Under these policies racial categorization has been the basis on which Indo-Fijians, as well as other ethnic minorities, have been denied ownership of land, proportionate political representation, and equal access to state benefits. In contemporary Fiji these racial dichotomies are frequently emphasized to the extent that race, particularly for indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians, has come to take on essential meanings for most aspects of personal identities.

This process is justified by a series of discourses and stories through which native Fijians affirm ownership and control over "their land" in opposition to the Indo-Fijian "others." In fact, Fijian ethnonationalism is rooted in their very successful use of their first-on-the-scene status as an ideological weapon in both political and everyday discourses about personal rights, land, and belonging (Lawson 1990). Stories about personal experiences with ghosts are one example of such discourses, which are frequently used to dramatize social differences like race and ethnicity. In these, ghosts are often presented as intrinsic to Fijian land and tradition, and they generally emerge to protect indigenous Fijian interests against Indo-Fijian or European intruders. These stories are particularly potent in

this context because they draw explicitly upon Fijians' spiritual connection to the land.

These dynamics were central to Ajay's analysis of our ghostly experience in Levuka. During our subsequent discussions it became clear that Ajay connected the haunting with a series of warnings he had received about going to Levuka prior to the trip. Being the first modern town settlement in Fiji, founded in the early 1800s, and the first national capital of the united chiefdom of Fiji, Levuka is intrinsically connected to many of the defining moments of modern Fijian history. It was the site for the official Deed of Cession, where local chiefs ceded sovereignty of the Fijian islands to the British crown, and has a prominent place in many Fiji citizens' national imagination. For my Indo-Fijian friend it was also associated with indigenous Fijian tradition and spirituality, which demanded caution and respect from outsiders like us. He considered the nocturnal visit by a ghost in this context, and for the following hours he was straining his brain to figure out ways we could potentially have violated Fijian traditional norms on our visit to the island—something which he was convinced had triggered the ghost to appear.

These same dynamics were prevalent in most ghost stories I heard during fieldwork: Ghosts are perceived to be deeply connected to Fijian tradition and spiritual life, and as such they are both territorially bound to particular places and associated with indigenous cultural practices. Whether they appear as specters of deceased ancestors, monstrous beings hidden in the forests, or as invisible forces of the land, they frequently emerge as protectors of indigenous Fijian rights, representations of a violent and not quite forgotten past, bearers of curses, or bad omens for things to come. In most stories, ghosts also appear directly connected to political discourses and racial differences.

This conceptualization of ghosts being directly connected to Fijian land ownership and indigenous rights is also well exemplified by a story I was told by another Indo-Fijian respondent, Balram, a middle-aged construction worker. I was accompanying Balram and some of his workers on a trip from Nadi to Sigatoka in the southwestern parts of Viti Levu. Shortly before we arrived, Balram suddenly stopped the car, declared to his workers that it was time for a break before he took me aside and explained that he had to tell me a story. While the other workers relished the break and took some time off, lying down in the sun at the roadside, chatting and smoking cigarettes, Balram led me across the road and pointed to a spacious, double-story house sitting on its own in a little copse some thirty meters away from the road. Judging from the windowless façade and unpainted brick exterior, I figured it must still be under construction. "This house," Balram started, lowering his voice and putting his head

conspiratorially near mine, "is being re-built for the third time, after lots of problems."[4] He paused dramatically and prompted me to guess the reason for all the problems. While I had an inkling I was in for a ghost story, I shook my head and encouraged him to explain.

According to Balram, the house was being built on Crown Land which had been made available for purchase shortly after the Crown reclaimed it in the early 1990s after the local kinship-based landowning unit, or *mataqali*, had ceased to exist in the sense that there were no longer any rightful claimants to inherit the land. The land had been purchased by a Gujarati merchant who owned several shops in the town of Sigatoka and had bought the title to build a new home for his extended family. From the outset the project had been marred by a series of problems. In what Balram considered audacious arrogance, the owner had failed to ask local indigenous Fijians to perform a *sevusevu* prior to commencing the construction. The *sevusevu*, in this context, is a ceremony performed in honor of a Fijian chief or, more symbolically, Fijian land, in order to get permission to be present on Fijian land, or to apologize for a violation of Fijian customs or traditions. It involves the representation of dried *yaqona* roots and the ritual drinking of *yaqona* accompanied with a formal request for permission, forgiveness, or acceptance. For many Indo-Fijians, it is a key aspect of securing good relations with the indigenous Fijian landowners, who in turn frequently acknowledge it as a great token of respect integral to smooth interracial relations. For Balram, and many other Indo-Fijians I discussed this with, ignoring this ceremony is tantamount to "asking for trouble."

What is more, from the outset, many local building workers had refused to work on the property among rumors that it was built on "unsuitable land," something Balram insisted meant that it was "a haunted place, full of witchcraft." The owner resorted to hiring builders from Suva, three hours' drive away on the other side of the island in order to recommence construction, but they did not last long before they packed up. Soon after they arrived at the site they reportedly heard shrill whistling near the building, "a sure sign that Fijian ghosts have been disturbed." Later, the landlord sought to circumvent what he seemingly considered local superstitions by hiring a New Zealand–owned building company, but the problems continued. Dramatically, just before completion, a landslide caused one half of the house to collapse. According to Balram, this "would make smart people realize it was a dangerous place," as it was certainly hard evidence of the presence of "ghosts, or evil spirits" on the land. The landlord did not, however, and in the coming months the house had suffered floods, fires, and a series of inexplicable incidents involving ghosts. On the day we were there, construction work had again come to a halt for reason unbeknownst

to Balram, although he was convinced it was connected to ghostly activity.

For Balram, the moral of the story was clear: The Indo-Fijian developer had violated indigenous Fijian ownership to the land and, despite being repeatedly warned off the land by spiritual activity, was punished and "haunted." The lesson learnt was one of racially informed morality—Indo-Fijians "need to respect the land, do *sevusevu*" as well as "be careful not to disrupt Fijian spirits." The spirits—Balram used the terms "spirits" and "ghosts" interchangeably in our conversation—"are part of the land" and people, particularly Indo-Fijians, have no such intrinsic claims. The parallels to my previous story from Levuka are obvious. Ajay followed a similar logic where a violation of Fijian land could invoke the ire of Fijian ghosts. In both cases, hauntings are directly linked to a notion that Indo-Fijians, and perhaps Europeans, were visitors on the land and needed to be respectful and cautious not to upset the social order.

These and several other stories focused explicitly on ghosts emerging to signify, mark, or punish Indo-Fijian (mostly) or other non-Fijian respondents when they had violated sacred, ceremonial, or otherwise culturally significant ground—either merely by their unwelcome presence or by committing tabooed actions. Ghosts are often perceived to be profoundly moral beings concerned with policing and disciplining bodies in space and protecting Fijian land and custom. This is also emphasized by how strategies for avoiding or pleasing ghosts are based on power-knowledge distinctions. Balram highlighted that conducting *sevusevu* prior to entering Fijian land or commencing building work was central to avoiding the wrath of Fijian spirits. In a similar vein, Ajay suggested that we remove ourselves from Levuka as our presence was obviously unwelcome, or that we should make sure we formally asked permission for our further stay.

Experiences with ghosts like these are consistently framed by, and understood in terms of, a pervasive racial discourse where Fijians are the rightful occupants of the land and Indo-Fijians are outsiders whose existence is conditioned by acknowledging this. These, as well as the subsequent telling of ghosts stories, occur in a social context which is profoundly racialized, and permeated with race-based ideologies and practices, and thus serve to augment and clarify the racial nature of social life in line with Omi and Winant's observations that "racialized social structure shapes racial experience and conditions meaning" (1994, 59). Ghosts are consistently categorized according to the strict racial distinctions that define the human population in Fiji, and their emergence in the community are nearly always understood and explained through a racialized discourse.

Ghost Stories As a Discursive Genre

Ghosts may be considered important discursive tools in the redrawing of racial boundaries and reproduction of racial categories in everyday life. While it is well established that micro-level, everyday social practices like stories, jokes, gossip, and songs—what Scott labels "hidden transcripts" (1990, 5)—can have profound social impacts, the majority of research has tended to focus on these techniques as "vehicles which act as critiques of the powerful" (Martinez 1997, 268). Little is said about how informal communication strategies are also deployed to reinforce and strengthen hegemonic discourses about social categories in the way that I suggest ghost stories are utilized in Fiji.

These stories can be defined as a genre of highly politicized narratives which become possible in the particular contexts they are told, understood, and experienced. In some cases the link to macro-politics has been explicit, for instance in a famous case when the leader of the marginal party Kudru na Vanua (Grumble of the Land) claimed the status of *kalou vu* in the campaign leading up to the 1987 election. As a rightful descendant from the creators of the Fijian nation and people, he ran an election campaign on the premise that he was the only legitimate leader of the Fijian people and land and the only candidate that could protect Fijians against the Indian threat (Ratuva 2006, 34). At other times, the political links have been less explicit. In 1993, a ghost was reportedly seen in Parliament House in Suva. What was described as "one handsome chief" and was believed to be "a *vu*" (god), and later a *kalou vu*, dressed in traditional chiefly attire, was reportedly caught on security camera as he was moving through several meeting rooms. Clairvoyants subsequently claimed that the ghosts believed that Fijians ought to place more emphasis on traditional values. Indeed, according to the then active *Fiji Daily Post*, the spirit made a specific warning to political leaders that "things could blow up among the indigenous people if there is no unity" (O' Callaghan 1993).

While most ghost stories lack the same overt link to the formal political sphere, these examples are significant in this context as, among other things, they symbolize a discursive shift in the understanding and definitions of ghosts and spirits from what we for instance saw represented in earlier colonial records. From traditionally being highly localized, morally ambiguous beings used to protect and enforce social protocol in villages, Fijian *kalou vu* became ethnonationalistic political players in these contexts. What were once two distinct categories, *kalou vu* (ancestral gods) and *kalou yalo* (deified mortals), with distinctly different responsibilities and potencies, appear to have been conflated not only with each other but with Western concepts like ghosts. One could perhaps suggest, then, that

the *kalou vu* has become much more dominant than the *kalou yalo*, at least partly because they are more politically expedient. As a spiritual category the *kalou vu* represent a link to ancestral gods and pre-modern forces of the land and are associated much more strongly with Fijian spirituality and tradition. As such they can also be used more effectively to teach lessons about political categories like ethnicity, race, and, as is demonstrated in the following section, gender.

Furthermore, while the *kalou vu* cannot easily be ontologically equated with the Western notion of ghosts, it is clear that the two concepts overlap in contemporary Fijian discourse. This conflation can be illustrated by the prevalence of the word *vu*, which was the most common word used by my respondents and was generally translated as "ghost" or "spirit" in my fieldwork conversations. This is in itself an example of how ancestral spirits change and take on new meanings in a changing social context. Importantly, I argue that it serves to make the power of these creatures more universal outside the traditional Fijian village discourses also while at the same time maintaining the spiritual efficacy derived from being associated with Fijian land and tradition. This enables the *vu* to seamlessly move from one social or cultural context to another and remain meaningful from different—namely indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian—perspectives, a point I illustrate by discussing some specific ghost sightings from western Viti Levu in 2009.

Hauntings, Moralities, and Maramarua

Racial dynamics were also at the forefront of another ghost story which was in circulation around the time I undertook fieldwork. Typically this story included a young girl, locally referred to as Maramarua or Lewarua. Literally translated as "twin girls" or "twofaced girl," this narrative appears to be a variation of a legend that has been ubiquitously present in narratives and folklore in various locations in Fiji for a long time (Presterudstuen, 2014). While the story existed in numerous versions that highlighted different dimensions both of the ghost itself and of the moral of the story, the background of the ghost was often the same. Maramarua was said to have originated in a prominent village near Nadi's commercial center. As a young girl she fell in love with a European commercial visitor, with whom she eventually moved away, leaving her family and traditional ties behind. However, after a few years, her European boyfriend betrayed her and left her for another woman, forcing the young girl to eventually make her way back to the village to seek compassion and forgiveness. Upon returning, her father rejected her and she struggled to settle back into village life. After a few months, she drowned herself in the river in desperation over lost love and alienation from her family. Since then,

she has haunted the place, avenging herself on non-Fijian men tempted by the beauty of Fijian girls. Many of my indigenous Fijian interlocutors knew of the story and frequently used to scare me with the threat of the late-night temptress (see Alimardanian, Chapter 6, herein for a discussion on another ghost with similar motivations in Aboriginal Australia).

During my fieldwork I came across many people who had met Maramarua. Young Indo-Fijian and *kai loma* (locally born, part-Europeans), men in particular, feared her presence and frequently told me about their experiences with the ghost. Every story began with a stunningly beautiful Fijian or part-Fijian girl approaching them while they were out walking late at night. On two occasions this had happened in the early morning as the man in question was leaving a well-known nightclub in a famous tourist spot. On a quiet stretch of road the girl emerged from the darkness to get the man's attention. After a brief conversation the girl invited the man to join her by the river or in the forest in what my respondents interpreted as a promise of lovemaking. Infatuated, the men followed her, only to see the girl reveal herself as, according to Viktor, "an ugly, old Indian lady" or, in Jai's words, "a witch-like ghost." On both occasions the men fled the scene, convinced they had been lured by a ghost who would kill them as punishment for being frivolous and immoral.

For these men, this encounter represented a lesson in sexual morality. "It made me think: never chase a Fijian girl," Viktor said. Jai, a married Indo-Fijian man, shared these sentiments and added that "there are reasons why us Indians don't get messed up with Fijians too much." When we further discussed the events, both men as well as some of their friends argued that Maramarua was part of a Fijian spiritual realm which included "witchcraft" and "black magic" they never could fully understand. Hence, the subtext to the story was racial in the sense that the ghost was perceived to police racial borders just as much as it taught sexual moralities.

While many indigenous Fijian men also harbored fears for Maramarua and perceived the ghost's agenda to be more gendered than racially based, the story was often understood to be a lesson in sexual morality along racial divisions. Young girls in the villages not only knew the story as a tale about male betrayal, but also as a warning against getting emotionally and sexually involved with foreign men. In the contemporary context this was particularly meaningful as the influx of tourists and a growing local entertainment industry conspired to subject increasing numbers of girls to sexual attention from visiting men who had both the willingness and means to make tempting offers for sexual relationships. While Maramarua was never reported as seen by girls or women, her presence served as a stark reminder of the consequences of affording oneself such sexual license and established a notion of foreign males as sexual predators.

On another level this story also symbolized the perceived incompatibility between European culture and Fijian tradition. Maramarua's destiny highlights the point that Fijian identities are deeply connected to their village and tied to their kinship group, while also teaching that these relationships are full of obligations and reciprocity. Part of the moral didacticism of the story focused on how the girl had sacrificed her family for the temptation of a life outside the confines of tradition, which was eventually revealed as an empty promise at the expense of her traditional obligation. This was a selfishness directly associated with "the European way of life" which eventually alienated her from "the Fijian way," to the extent that she was not accepted back into the kinship group.

Conclusion

The key contention in this chapter has been that ghosts and stories about ghosts have the potential to open up new understandings of how Fijians and Indo-Fijians experience and understand the social reality of race on an everyday basis. However, while the ghosts I encountered or heard stories about became possible and real in these politicized and racialized contexts, this is by no means the only way to understand ghosts in Fiji. Their connection to the pre-modern Fijian pantheon, their ambiguous nature as both protectors and bad omens, as well as their ubiquity in both everyday and official discourses, are all aspects which conspire to give ghosts a unique and contested place in contemporary society. For many Fiji citizens they are central to the understanding of the relationship between Fijian land and the people that occupy the islands, and they are frequently invoked to explain the perceived tensions between such categories as Fijians and outsiders and tradition and modernity. In this sense they have significant impacts on ways people think and act on an everyday basis, making them impossible to ignore in any social analysis of Fijian society.

Yet the nature of these beings remains unresolved. Ajay and I never managed to settle our discussion about who or what knocked on our door in Levuka. What I, with an outsider's rational scientific gaze, readily dismissed as illogical and superstitious beliefs about ghosts, looked different to Ajay, whose connection to the Fijian cultural sphere is deeper and more personal. Like other monstrous beings, Fijian ghosts are made real and visible through particular, culturally specific practices of seeing and experiencing the world. Ghosts seen in this light are neither permanent fixtures of the material world, nor available to everyone. This, perhaps, is where anthropology can make its biggest contribution toward understanding monsters. Or, to turn this on its head, and following along the lines of Peter J. Dendle, the monster

is exemplary for exploring this ontological conundrum of seeing and understanding the world, as it "resides at the semantic and epistemological border between what society accepts as real and what it rejects as imaginary, and [as] it trespasses regularly and obstinately into both of those realms" (2012, 448). From such a point of view it becomes clear that the question about the reality of monsters becomes a diversion from the real analytical value of people's encounters with monsters—that is, what do these beings tell us about the people they haunt and the relationship between people and their communities. On that note, Ajay and I are probably best served by moving our gaze, obsession, and discussion away from Judy the ghost, and instead grappling with what our reaction to her appearance can tell us about our respective positions in the contemporary Fijian cultural realm.

Notes

1. This, as well as every other reference to my field respondents, is a pseudonym. In order to differentiate between indigenous Fijian and Indo-Fijian respondents I have tried to conform to their respective nomenclature traditions when choosing pseudonyms.
2. *Yaqona,* or kava is the dried root of the *Piper methysticum* plant which is pounded into fine powder, strained through a muslin cloth, and mixed with cold water. The resulting mixture is a mildly narcotic drink which has been attributed ritual and symbolic properties in Fijian tradition for a myriad of purposes.
3. This is an ethnically, linguistically, and religiously diverse group subject to both internal and external identity politics. The terms 'Indians' or 'Fiji Indians' remain more commonly used collectively in Fiji, but Indo-Fijian is the preferred term among community leaders and equal rights campaigners focusing on their citizenship rights in Fiji rather than their ancestry from India.
4. All direct quotes which are not referenced are from my own field notes. Interviews with correspondents were generally conducted in English or a mixture of English and Fijian dialects or, in this case, English interspersed with some Hindustani (the local term for the Indo-Fijian vernacular).

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Chapter 9

Entanglements between Tao People and Anito on Lanyu Island, Taiwan

Leberecht Funk

My chapter is about Anito, a rather nasty kind of malicious spirit intensely feared and hated by the Tao people of Lanyu Island, and about how multidimensional entanglements with Anito ultimately define Tao lives.[1] Anito are by no means restricted to Lanyu and are also found in many parts of the Philippines and other neighboring areas (Salazar 1968; Hornedo 1980; Apostol 2010). In this they share common roots with the Tao, whose ancestors were Philippine in origin and are said to have reached Lanyu some 800 years ago. Anito (which are related to Malaysian *Antu*, Indonesian *Hantu*, Micronesian *Aniti*, and Polynesian *Aitu*) are ancestral spirits roaming the vicinity of villages and their surrounding gardens and forests. On Lanyu, most Anito are said to be evil, intent on upsetting the plans of humans, inflicting physical and mental diseases, causing misfortunes, and stealing human souls (see also Presterudstuen, Chapter 8 herein). Some are less potent or aggressive, causing only minor trouble like stealing food and making someone slip or stumble. And if they are the spirits of one's own dead, Anito may even be benevolent, blessing their descendants and assisting them in times of hardship. However, even good-natured Anito sometimes attack their nearest living relatives. Anito, then, are ambiguous creatures—monstrous in their intentions, through their bodies (visible to young children, whose eyes are said to be "much purer" than those of adults) and their placement on the margins of human settlements, as well as in their cosmological positioning.

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I am concerned in particular with the ways in which the Tao relate to, are haunted by, and deal with the Anito. I explore these issues by first detailing quotidian, and then cosmological, Tao-Anito entanglements, followed by a discussion of categories, morality, and the role Anito play in the Tao life cycle. I pay special attention to the ways in which Tao relate to Anito through their souls, and how Anito relate to Tao through death. I then provide ethnographic data illustrating the emotional entanglements between Anito and Tao. In the conclusion, I transcend Li Yiyuan's (1959) insights on *The Social Function of Anito* by complementing his psychodynamic explanation with insights deriving from the analysis of cultural ideas, social structure, and historical processes, expanding understanding of why Tao lives are so intimately entangled with the monsters that haunt them.

Tao-Anito Everyday Entanglements

Today, there are about 3,500 Tao living in six communities on Lanyu. While older generations are still mostly subsistence farmers, younger people are becoming more and more sinicized. However, integration into the Taiwanese nation-state has not lead to a decline in the belief in or presence of evil spirits. The contradictions arising from tradition and modernity cause significant social and mental-health problems, often interpreted within the framework of an animistic belief system. Food shortages and incurable diseases—the "ghosts" of the past—have been joined by severe social problems related to alcohol abuse and work migration to Taiwan. The dynamics of socio-cultural transformation not only intensify social suffering and distress but also cause people to behave in socially disapproved ways regularly ascribed to Anito agency.

Knowledge about Anito is diffuse and people say that one cannot know about Anito for sure. For instance, some Tao suggest that the hazards of the past resulted in a multitude of unknown dead who, being forgotten by their descendants, turned into de-individualized and especially mean monsters. There is no fixed canon about malicious spirits; every village and every lineage group has had different experiences and ways of dealing with Anito. Knowledge about the island, its maritime environment, and supernatural powers is kept a strategic secret within descent groups. This lack of definition makes beliefs in the Anito even more effective and powerful. A danger that is not properly defined—an omnipresent monster that lurks everywhere—cannot be easily defeated.

However, some points about Anito presence can be generalized as they are said to inhabit Lanyu in spatially, temporally, and sensuously significant ways (see also Thurman, Chapter 2, and Musharbash, Chapter 3 herein). The further one moves away from the human settlement the more likely it is

to come across malicious spirits. Certain dark and wet places on the island and its adjacent ocean waters are associated with Anito and are avoided by everyone. Equally, places where murder took place are avoided as they are haunted by the victim's Anito. There are more than 1,000 place names on Lanyu that are ascribed with *apiya* (good) and *marahet* (bad) qualities according to soil characteristics, plant life, and historical events of the past (Benedek 1987; Hu 2008). Temporally, Anito prefer to lurk from late afternoon until before daybreak, but encounters are possible at any time. The Tao solilunar calendar assigns auspicious and inauspicious days, thus defining times when human-Anito encounters are more likely to occur. It is widely believed that spiritual beings have senses of superhuman quality since they are able to perceive sounds and smells regardless of distance. Malicious Anito reveal their presence through unexpected and inexplicable sounds, like the call of a bird that cannot be seen anywhere in the vicinity. Natural phenomena that contradict normalcy potentially arouse anxiety as they are connected to the "monstrous side of life." For instance, unusual red markings on an otherwise green lizard are taken as a sign of imminent danger from supernatural forces, and a large winged butterfly and an owl—both endemic species to the island—are believed to be embodiments of Anito.

As Anito are believed to overhear human conversations, there are many things one cannot openly talk about. A man going to the ocean to fish will not admit what he is up to (even when wearing his fishing gear), because if Anito find out his plans they will warn the fish in the bay ensuring there will be no catch that day (cf. Yu 1991, 74). Another example is the use of euphemisms to disguise intentions. Most people will not openly talk about taking the plane to Taiwan but simply state that they are going to *miyoyohyo* (stroll about) to mislead Anito, who otherwise might send bad weather, causing the flight to be cancelled. The restriction on speech leads to what anthropologists label opacity of minds: One can never know about the "insides" of other persons and their "real intentions." Another effect is that not just Anito but also all unrelated people do not know when one is going to do what with whom and where. Those people one cannot trust and who are one's potential enemies are misguided just like Anito.

Tao-Anito Cosmological Entanglements

The entanglements between humans and Anito need to be conceptualized within a system of morally calibrated relations that stretch across different worlds, all of which are part of the multilayered, hierarchically structured Tao cosmos. Its inhabitants are diverse spiritual beings and humans who generally relate to each other in hierarchical or antagonistic ways depending on their (social) relations. The following account of Tao cosmology

combines my own research with previous publications by anthropologists who have worked on Lanyu (Stewart 1947; Del Re 1951; De Beauclair 1957; 1959; Liu 1959; Dong 1997; Sinan Jyavizong 2009).

Although there are some disagreements about the details, it is widely agreed that the upper realm of heaven is populated by gods who live in celestial villages similar to those of humans on earth. The eldest and most influential god is called *Akey do langangarahen* (literally "Grandfather in heaven") who, even though he does not interfere directly with the inhabitants on earth, imposes sanctions when necessary. The celestial stratum immediately below him is the home of so-called Messenger Gods, who constantly spy on humans, tallying their deeds. Whenever they observe the breaking of taboos, or some other kind of morally wrong behavior, they inform the *Akey do langangarahen*, who in turn becomes *somozi* (angry) and sends out celestial spirits (also called Anito) to descend to earth and punish the human perpetrators. They do this by inciting the earthly Anito to spoil field crops by slipping into the bodies of smaller animals such as rats, snakes, and insects. A plague of caterpillars that besets the sweet potato fields can be seen as retribution for the breaking of taboos. The machinations of celestial Anito are not restricted to famines; they can also cause typhoons, flooding, landslides, and bad weather (see also Presterudstuen, Chapter 8 herein). The sanctions they impose more often than not punish whole villages rather than individual wrongdoers. In a very general sense, then, Anito are regarded as cosmic forces, which emit a destructive impact upon human life and its foundations (Sinan Jyavizong 2009, 79).

The Tao cosmological model consists of a multitude of celestial and subterranean strata that cannot be described here in more detail (but see Del Re 1951). In each layer "good" and "bad" figures co-exist in different but interconnected worlds. In the sky, the gods reside together with celestial Anito. On earth, the Tao live their lives in parallel with earthly Anito. There is no conceptual differentiation between humans and gods, who are called *Tao* and *Tao do to* respectively. The meaning of Tao is "human being" and *do to* can be translated as "up high" so that gods are literally "humans in the sky." No matter which strata they inhabit, regardless if they are gods, humans, celestial or earthly Anito, all relations can be reduced to the opposition between Tao and Anito. And yet, on Lanyu, it is impossible to categorically distinguish between people and monsters.

Tao and Anito: A Problem of Categories

While humans are (meant to be) industrious workers, monsters are (said to be) lazy and to prefer to steal food. Ideally, people are emotionally controlled and balanced, monsters are said to be greedy and angry creatures

that are highly unpredictable. Humans wash themselves every day to avoid body odor, monsters feel attracted by sickening smell. The possibility of crossing categories—for humans to behave like Anito and for Anito to disguise their real identity—always remains. Personhood is defined by adjustment to *iwawalam so Tao* (roughly: social norms and behavioral etiquette of the Tao people), ability to work, emotional balance, and respective stage in the life cycle. Since all these positions are subjected to changes, the humanity of any human cannot be taken for granted.

The divide between people and malicious spirits is part of a larger cultural dichotomy that, at its most general level, consists of the moral categories of *apiya* (good) and *marahet* (bad). These moral judgments permeate a whole series of related binary oppositions such as day and night, calm and unrest, social persona and subjectivity, strong and weak, flourishing and diminishing, and pleasant and unpleasant. Together they form a system of cultural meaning in which categories are neither black-and-white nor mutually exclusive. The belief in ancestral and unbound malicious spirits in combination with the notion of fragile souls forms the basis of a generally given permeability between human and supernatural domains. Wandering souls are only loosely attached to the human body, and this creates the cultural link between the physical and metaphysical worlds (Bischof-Okubo 1989, 56).

Traditionally, the Tao believed a person had between three and eight souls (Sinan Jyavizong 2009, 73). Although the Christian notion of a unitary soul has put this model into question, its underlining assumptions remain. Christianity and traditional belief systems are not necessarily contradictory; the Christian soul may be located at different places of the body without being a divided entity. My impression from interviews and participant observation is that even today at least seven souls—or seven manifestations of a unitary soul—can be located within the human body. These are the *pahad*, or "vital soul," that resides either in the head or in the chest, and the six lesser souls that can be found in the shoulder, elbow, and knee joints respectively (cf. Guo 1988, 70–71; as quoted in Sinan Jyavizong 2009, 74).

Souls are said to *somalap so pahad* (leave the human body and to fly around) when a person is dreaming, feeling attracted by some object, or experiencing strong fear. Roaming souls are highly vulnerable to malicious spirits, who try to harm or even kill them. Spirit possession occurs when wandering souls are caught by malicious spirits or their position in the human body is taken over by intruding Anito. The person concerned is affected by disease, suffers from pains, and usually behaves in strange ways, for example speaking incoherently, using "impolite language" and easily becoming irritated.

A person, then, is not a unique and bounded entity—as contemporary North Atlantic ideas about the individual would hold—but rather a fragile and permeable composition of "multiple selves" that may even include external components. Tao categories of humans and monsters (and those connected with them) resist the logic of the Cartesian dualism of mind and matter, and can be better understood as extreme poles within a dynamic continuum. As was stated by Viveiros de Castro (1998; 2004), in many animistic societies the fundamental problem is multinaturalism rather than multiculturalism. The question of primary concern for the Tao (and many people with similar belief systems elsewhere) is: "Are you really the human you pretend to be or are you a monster?"

Tao, Anito, and Morality

In Tao society one of the worst moral failures is to *abo so angangayan* (not to go anywhere for work), which has the underlying meaning of being *malma* (lazy). A "lazy" person is said to have lost his/her knee souls; the non-animated legs lack vitality and decisiveness to go to the gardens or to the sea, the primary sites of food production. Individuals without any riches who do not strive for a better living are exposed to *ikaoya* (contempt) for their own miserable situation. When noticing such "disgraceful" behavior in others, showing contempt is an important and necessary demonstration of moral righteousness.[2] Socially disapproved behavior is met by scolding and ridiculing and, if this does not help, willful ignoring. People who live in a state of permanent shame are solitary individuals, neither looked at nor talked to. Exclusion is necessary because they have crossed the border between proper humans and Anito-like beings.

Regardless of adherence to social norms, being alone already bears a moral component. It is implicit that those without male offspring, those who are widows/widowers, orphans, crippled persons, or childless elderly have a disturbed relationship with ancestral spirits, whose blessing is needed to lead a flourishing life. Without any influence in the village and lacking the spiritual protection of their ancestors, marginalized individuals or families do not have to be feared and are often harassed by others. The merging of morality and ontological existence has strong implications for Tao social and emotional life.

On an individual level, a physically strong person will gain influence over others because of his/her ability to work and because of ancestral blessing. Being "strong" and being blessed is ultimately the same, just as an "ugly person" cannot be terminologically differentiated from a "morally bad person" as both are *marahet so tao*. On a group level, being "strong" is

related to majority consensus. A *meynakem a tao* (influential man with considerable wealth) can measure his status by his ownership of land, gold, and livestock as well as the number of followers he has.[3] Patrilineages gain influence if they consist of many male members, maximizing agricultural yields. Their power derives from accumulated land that will only be truly theirs as they maintain the necessary work force to cultivate it, since fallow fields will be taken by other villagers in need. While the accumulation of unused land is thought to be a right and morally just act from the perspective of the better-off lineages, those who lose their fields will often perceive the taking over of "vacant land" as a form of theft. Lacking able-bodied males, the "weaker" group has no chance to confront those who are "stronger" but nevertheless hold grudges against them.

The Tao Life Cycle, Souls, and Anito

My usage of the terms "strong" and "weak" corresponds to the Tao's notion of *moyat* and *jimoyat*. They describe not only the abilities and the productive success of people but also the states of their souls, which are supposed to change over the course of a lifetime. In infancy and toddlerhood, souls are perceived to be extremely "weak" as they do not know about the human world yet. They are easily seduced by the evil tricks of Anito, who lurk in the dark and call out for the unknowing child. Usually, a careless soul only gets caught by a monster for a short moment before freeing itself and, in great fright, rushing back to its proper place in the chest/head or in the joints.[4] In these cases, a person will slip or fall down, but there will be no serious threat to his/her health. However, sometimes the soul falls prey to such a monster and is not able to escape. The Anito is then said to "eat" the soul or to tear it in two so that it is destroyed forever. While the contaminating effects of human-Anito encounters range from mild headaches to influenza, diarrhea, and temporary mental confusion, the permanent destruction of the *pahad* (vital soul) inevitably leads to a person's death.

This is why children are not allowed to leave the village and its immediate surroundings until the beginning of adolescence, when they are "strong" enough to resist the temptations of the Anito and keep their souls in place. Infants and small children stay within or close to the house where they are never left unattended. Their mother may not go to places where Anito are said to exist as these monsters can smell her milk and will follow her home to harm the child. If a small child is constantly crying and there is nothing the caregivers can do to calm it down, its soul is said to have left and lost its way back to the child's body. Very early the next morning the parents will go to the seashore to call the child's soul, which is believed to

stray there in great despair. The soul will recognize the parent's voices and happily follow them home to re-enter the child's body (Funk et al. 2012, 227; Röttger-Rössler et al., forthcoming).

To manage loosely attached souls, constant awareness, strong personal will, physical robustness, and cultural knowledge are needed. *Awareness* is important as it helps to avoid accidents and mistakes. When building a canoe a man must focus on his work and avoid any distractions, lest a careless stroke of his axe destroys his precious wooden plank. A *strong personal will* is needed to maintain emotional balance and not to enter into states of emotional turmoil in which a person is perceived to be a passive object subjected to the ill-will of Anito. In winter, when people are exposed to chilly winds while working their fields, *physical robustness* is necessary to stay healthy and not become sick. Finally, a person must acquire *cultural knowledge* to correctly deal with ancestral beings, upon whose blessing well-being depends. While a person who meets these requirements is said to have a "strong" soul that enables him/her to ward off the Anito, someone without these qualities is supposed to have a "weak" soul that is easily seduced by and falls victim to the Anito.

It is generally believed that the souls of men are "stronger" than those of women and that the "weak" souls of children gain strength over the course of a lifetime. In emotional terms, a "strong" soul is defined by its fearlessness. According to the Tao, the frequency and intensity of experiencing anxiety and fear will steadily decrease as a person grows older. It is a sign of immaturity to run away from a fear-inducing object. More mature and knowing persons will not express their fear overtly and move away at measured walking pace.

Over the course of a lifetime, a person will inevitably transform into somebody increasingly fearless, as well as increasingly solitary. People prefer to spend their time among same-sex members of their age group, a preference that in the long run will lead to a gradual decrease of the number of possible interaction partners. Old age thus is a double-edged sword; an elderly person gains standing and is feared among those who are younger yet there are few older individuals left that have to be respected by him/her in turn. This newly achieved fearlessness is accompanied by a social as well as physical transformation into an Anito-like state: Social, since a solitary individual stands outside of society, physical, as bodily functions cease to perform; it is a human quality to control bodily fluids. Before Christian influences, frail elders were often isolated from the household when they became unable to walk and thus excrete bodily waste outside of the house. This signified the onset of the last stage of life, when consuming food and water was limited. *Pahad*, the vital soul, is said to be more and more alienated from a body that gradually loses its vital

functions. Without physical strength and control over their bodies, without the support of others, and without the spiritual presence of the vital soul, frail elders lack the status of full personhood. Even though the Tao do not call senile people Anito, there seems to be a connection between them and malicious spirits.[5] When death is imminent, fear and avoidance behavior gain prevalence over feelings of love and affection, and respect toward the elderly is expressed in an extreme form of social distancing. At death, bad smells and the generally uncomfortable situation associated with decomposition will drive *pahad* from the body, after which it flies to an uninhabited "White Island" to the South of Lanyu.

Death, Unbound Spirits, and Ancestors

The Tao's uneasiness in dealing with the deceased derives from their great fear of death which, according to them, is the most dangerous and ambiguous event of all. It is the moment humans' efforts to keep the Anito at bay have proven to be in vain as human and spirit worlds fuse into one. The corpse is a hybrid of a visible and tactile human body but with no life attached to it. It is a symbol of human defeat and anyone coming into close contact with it is believed to be in danger of sharing the same fate. Corpses are supposed to be the home of Anito spirits who emerge from them and reside in their vicinity. In linguistic terms "malicious spirit" and "corpse" are not separated and are both called Anito.

Although today almost all Tao are Christians, there are no cemeteries on the island. A coastal forest next to each village serves as a burial ground, where the dead must be immediately buried. The dirt of the burial ground is believed to be a highly polluting substance with disastrous consequences for the health of the living. Participants in a burial will not only clean themselves thoroughly to get rid of the dangerous filth, but will also receive gold and taro fields as compensatory gifts from the bereaved household. Most people do not dare to pass the burial ground either alone or at night as *marahet so vazey* (bad things)—the Anito—are said to attach to their bodies to be carried back to the village.

It is necessary to differentiate between the spirits of one's own and those of other groups. *Inapowan* (ancestral spirits) are never called Anito, instead respectful appellations are used. Dreaming of ancestral spirits is not necessarily a good omen since their intentions can never be known for sure. They may be longing for the company of those they had lived with until recently and, if in a state of despair, inflict fatal diseases upon their descendants to "pull them over to the other world." Though feared, ancestral spirits are also highly respected and people will sometimes feel affection

and gratitude toward them for providing livelihoods for all descending generations. Ancestors have cultivated the land and planted trees from which one can eat and build canoes. Their traditional knowledge is the foundation for survival in an often harsh environment. If proper relations to *inapowan* are maintained, benevolent and malicious spirits will check each other in a system of counterbalances.[6] But if this relationship is disturbed, when ancestral spirits have been neglected or disrespected by the living, they will distance themselves from their disobedient descendants and leave them spiritually unguarded. Just as young children are supposed to stay quiet in front of their parents, adults must respect ancestral beings by not producing any loud noises. Screaming and quarrelling will drive their guardian spirits away, and simultaneously attract malicious Anito.

The really dangerous Anito spirits are those of other descent groups with whom one has an antagonistic relationship or even a long-standing enmity. These creatures are not regulated by any code of moral law and will scrupulously attack unrelated people, stealing their souls and thus conform to the classification of "unbound spirits" by Levy et al. (1996, 14).

Anito, then, is a relative category, the definition of being a monster depending on one's membership to a social group. This was a point not well understood by previous authors who discussed Anito in absolute terms (De Beauclair 1957; Li 1959; Liu 1959; Yu 1991). I believe that the one-sidedness of their accounts derives from a reluctance of informants to mention ancestral spirits about whom one may not talk freely. Just talking about Anito may lure them, and avoiding mention of them is a strong indicator of the emotion that defines relations with Anito: *maniahey.*

Tao-Anito Emotional Entanglements

The primary emotion experienced in human-Anito encounters is *maniahey*, which can be best translated as "anxiety," and in certain cases as "fear" and "terror." While on Lanyu, I conducted an ethnolexicographical study in which more than fifty male and female informants between thirty-five and eighty years of age came up with an emotion story concerning *maniahey*. Acknowledging that what people *say* is not always what they actually *do*, my discussion of *maniahey* also contains material from systematic observation and documentation of emotional episodes I recorded.[7]

Most informants chose a *maniahey*-experiencing subject other than themselves. Those who were reported to feel *maniahey* were mostly women and younger people. Interestingly, anxiety-inducing encounters with Anito often occurred when alone; they were rare indeed among groups.

Complete negation of *maniahey* seems to be a strategy of emotion regulation as surprisingly many persons actually stated that they had never experienced this emotion themselves. In the vast majority of cases people were afraid of something that had not yet happened.

However, when the imagined nightmare is actually coming true and a person's physical health and mental well-being is at stake, *maniahey* can be best translated with "fear." This is the case, for instance, when a poisonous snake is winding around one's leg. From the viewpoint of the Tao, supernatural powers are involved since snakes are said to be instigated by Anito to approach and bite people. When fear is involved, the soul of a person is said to be frightened, or to experience *maniahey so pahad*. At this stage volitional control is impossible; the person experiences a petrifying state of horror, explained by the flight of the joint souls from his/her body. Physiological symptoms of fear, like a fluttering heart or an increase in breathing, indicate the moment of spiritual attack, when the soul is so frightened that it is about to leave and fly away, or *somalap so pahad*. An adult in this state will firmly cross his/her chest with both hands and whisper "*senap senap*" ("come back").

I suggest that *maniahey*, in part at least, originates from a culture-specific anxious disposition that was brought about by emotionally arousing child-rearing practices, as illustrated in the following examples. In order to calm whining infants, caregivers use a range of socialization techniques like clapping on the wooden floor or grunting like a monster.[8] Not yet capable of locating the source of the noise, infants will generally stay calm and motionless, exactly how caregivers like them to behave. Socialization practices tend to be ambiguous and diffuse and are not always preceded by misbehavior on the part of the child. From about age four onward, caregivers threaten to beat children by raising their right arm, which is accompanied by *ioya* (fierce scolding and demonstration of anger). Although the cultural ideal is a sanctioning agent who is always in control of his/her anger, some adults will lose their temper and enforce harsh punishment. Enduring bad moods of the child, as well as answering back to respected elders, are not tolerated and will lead to immediate sanctions. The young child's only way out of these emotional dramas is to stay quiet and motionless or to run away (Funk et al. 2012, 228–29; Röttger-Rössler et al., forthcoming).

Socialization practices have the objective of strengthening the child's soul and making it less vulnerable to supernatural threats. From about two years onward, toddlers are systematically and unexpectedly touched from behind until they will not flinch anymore. Children who show any signs of a fright reaction are laughed at by caregivers and bystanders alike. Again, for the children there is no way out of it but to stay calm and motionless.

The constant subjection to toughening-up exercises leads to an active suppression of the children's startle responses or, in other words, teaches them how to keep their fragile souls in place (Funk et al. 2012, 229; Röttger-Rössler et al., forthcoming).

Overcoming childhood anxieties is a long process that begins in toddlerhood and traditionally culminated around the age of ten, when children began to participate in subsistence activities.[9] Food production takes place beyond the immediate vicinity of the village in an environment that is perceived to be full of Anito-related dangers. One will meet them while working in the gardens, collecting firewood in the forests, foraging for seaweed along the coastal line, and fishing in the ocean. Only a person not afraid of Anito is able to produce food and support his/her family. The "productivity" and "industriousness" of a worker is denoted with the same word the Tao will use to describe a "strong" soul that can resist spiritual attack—*moyat*.

When going into the mountains to cut wood for the canoes the men walk fast and energetically, demonstrating their strength and vitality. They leave the semi-secure area of the fields and gardens and enter into the high mountains, where malicious Anito are supposed to dwell. Their style of walking is called *masozi*, which can be translated as "frighteningly" or "vitally aggressive." The "anger" of the men is a form of *controlled anger* that is focused on the Anito. The men ensure that their vital energy stays within them where it can be productively harnessed to enhance social well-being. *Controlled anger*—or the absence of anxiety and fear—is defined by a tensioning of muscles, keen focus of the gaze, and a decisiveness to work. Giving free rein to one's anger, however, is strongly frowned upon. Rage, as a form of *uncontrolled anger*, is a burst of energy with disruptive social consequences. The pouring out of anger is attributed to external forces such as Anito and is not seen as a proper human trait. When walking *masozi* the men demonstrate their moral superiority and higher status vis-à-vis the Anito.[10] Their tensioned bodies and focused feeling states are a means of protection against malicious spirits who are perceived as enemies. Tao and Anito can never be equals, and there can be no "good feelings" between them. From this it follows that either the humans gain control over the monsters or vice versa. The feeling states of Tao and Anito are diametrically opposed; the "strong" and "fearless" appearance of the human intruders into Anito territory is said to leave an impression on the malicious spirits who experience anxiety and fear and will not dare to approach. Any sensation of anxiety on the part of the men, however, may turn the tables and make the Anito the hunter and the Tao the prey.

Conclusion

In former times, the cohesion of society was threatened in reoccurring intervals by droughts and famines. Descent groups with many male members had advantage over those with fewer as they could more easily control access to fields, steal crops, and even kill others in their search for food. Since nobody dared to bury murder victims they were simply left where they fell. Nobody was willing to ever again create a field at these locations, believed to be haunted by the especially fierce and aggressive Anito of those unfortunate individuals (Yu & Dong 1998, 79–81). When food became finally available again, the small island communities had no choice but not to talk about past misdeeds and carry on with their subsistence activities. I suggest that previous breakdowns of the moral order are deeply inscribed into the cultural memories of the Tao people and that horrible past events may not be expressed directly but only by means of projection into the realms of Anito.

Strict upbringing and a social hierarchy based on age groups do not permit open displays of anger toward respected elders. Children are not allowed to answer back or even weep aloud in front of elders. Instead, negatively evaluated human traits are externalized and projected into the supernatural world. The anger, greed, and envy of the monster are a projection of one's own bad feelings that cannot be expressed within the social world of humans (see also Eickelkamp, Chapter 4, and Morton, Chapter 5 herein). Rather than self-hatred, which would cause serious damage to physical and mental well-being, the bad aspects of oneself are projected onto supernatural scapegoats.

This is true not only for individuals but also for the well-being of society. The existence of monsters makes it possible to rid oneself and the community of "bad things" which are not understood as an essential part of the human world. In the past, Anito enabled people to make sense of famines and social collapse and nowadays of transformation processes and social stress.

The dimension where these corresponding threads run together is emotional experience. Emotions are embodiments of cultural values and social norms. In the Tao case they are not perceived as individual internal characteristics but as embodied feeling facts of social relations and thus ultimately linked to social hierarchy and moral status. Belief in wandering souls and malicious Anito, in combination with socialization practices that aim at hardening children's souls, are involved in the culture-specific shaping of emotions like "anxiety," "fear," and "anger." Certain affective phenomenological experiences, such as arising "anger" or physiological

symptoms of "fear," are perceived as dangerous since they are accompanied by a loss of volitional control which is synonymous with the departure of the soul from the body.[11] It is exactly because Tao souls are not firmly anchored within the person that human and Anito worlds may become blurred.

The hierarchy between "good" and "bad" as well as "strong" and "weak" is expressed within a nexus of "anger" and "anxiety" or, if emotions are more intense, "hatred" and "fear." In regard to one's own bilateral kin group, social hierarchy and culturally inscribed feeling rules are clearly defined. It is impossible to revolt against one's parents or ancestors as they may inflict sanctions when morally wrong behavior occurs. Although *inapowan* (ancestral spirits) are ambiguous and potentially dangerous beings, they are nevertheless bound within a hierarchical framework. The situation is different when it comes to malicious Anito, who are not regulated by any code of law. Here the relationship is not hierarchical but antagonistic: It is the "stronger" opponent who will prevail over the "weaker" by the fact that one is fearless and frightens the other. On a supernatural level, Tao moral anger is focused on the Anito who, impressed by demonstrations of strength and aggressiveness, do not dare to approach. On a social level, non-related descent groups will show off their manpower and threatening potential to keep other lineages at bay. From both a structural perspective and that of an anthropology of emotion, Anito and antagonistic descent groups bear some similarities.

However, the Tao are not at the mercy of their passions, nor are they passive victims of their affective lives. They have cultural strategies at their disposal to overcome "anxiety" and "fear" and thus to keep their monsters at bay. They can actively control their feelings by means of volitional control and willful manipulation of their somatic nervous system. When walking, *masozi* muscles are tensioned and the monstrous emotions of "anxiety" and "fear" cannot enter the body. The interactions of the somatic and autonomous nervous systems, the alternation of active and passive states, being in control of the situation or not, feeling "strong" or "weak," are all indications of one's status vis-à-vis other human and spiritual beings. In a society where being "strong" is an essential necessity for survival and well-being most people are not willing to admit that they fear monsters, be they malicious spirits or fellow humans. The special feature of Tao demonstrations of strength is that they are built on an anxious disposition, a vulnerability that will last a lifetime. That is why the Anito are monsters feared and hated at the same time.

Notes

1. This chapter is based on my field research on Lanyu from October 2010 until August 2011, part of the bi-disciplinary project "Socialization and Ontogeny of Emotions in Cross-Cultural Comparison" (2009–2013) located at the Cluster "Languages of Emotion" at the Freie Universität Berlin and lead by the social and cultural anthropologist Birgitt Röttger-Rössler (Freie Universität Berlin) and the developmental psychologist Manfred Holodynski (University of Münster).
2. This is not to say that the Tao will not feel sympathy with those who are in miserable situations. However, on a behavioral level, contempt has to be expressed.
3. The Tao public domain is male-dominated. However, women contribute to and share the status of a *meynakem a tao*.
4. For reasons of readability I use the singular form here, but the reader should keep in mind that more than one soul might be affected.
5. Naughty children are sometimes called *likey o anito* (little Anito). Interestingly, here a parallel can be found in the English term "little monsters" with which young children are sometimes referred to.
6. Good relations to the ancestors are maintained if *makanyo* (taboos) are observed and sacrifices are offered. For instance, inaugurations of houses and canoes are accompanied by the slaughtering of pigs, whose life is taken and sent to the ancestors while the meat is shared among the living.
7. All interviews of the ethnolexicographical approach were conducted in the local language *ciriciring so Tao* with the help of my local research assistants Xie Laiyu and Huang Yingzhen.
8. Infants who are sanctioned in the ways described here are close to one year of age and have learnt how to sit by themselves.
9. Due to the influences of modern schooling, today's children do not have the time to engage in traditional methods of food production at this early age anymore. The non-applicability of the traditional economic mode poses serious problems for the emotional development of younger generations who are now deprived of this cultural pathway of overcoming the more "passive" states of childhood.
10. The general term for "anger" is *somozi*. It can be used to denote both *controlled anger* as well as *uncontrolled anger*. As a form of moral anger it closely represents the emotion of *song* among the inhabitants of the Micronesian island of Ifaluk (Lutz 1988).
11. Judging by emotion concepts and body language it can be said that the Tao have a container model of anger. When talking about anger experiences many Tao make upward movements with their hand to illustrate how their anger was rising up in that particular moment.

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Chapter 10

When Goblins Come to Town: The Ethnography of Urban Hauntings in Georgia

Paul Manning

Of all the fantastic goblins of contemporary Georgian folklore only one, the Kaji, can be found haunting both the village and the city. One day, as I was taking leave of my friend Elizbar in a village near Tbilisi, we were taking one last walk through the village as I waited for another friend to pick me up and take me back to the city. Elizbar, who had recently returned from Tbilisi to this, his childhood village, saw his next door neighbor wandering the street, glaring toward his own house and shaking a farm implement in that direction. Elizbar gave me a weary, sympathetic smile as he explained that his neighbor had a bad infestation of Kajis on his roof, and was trying to drive them off. Kajis? I had never heard of anyone who actually believed in real Kajis. Looking at this man's face up close, it was clear he had his share of inner demons, but his concern was these damned Kajis: five in number, they sat on his roof all day cursing him and throwing things at him, and by night, they were apparently sneaking into his house to rifle through his things and pilfer goods and documents.

My friend from the city, Nugzar, arrived not a half hour later and I left. I told him about the neighbor's problem with Kajis, which made him laugh, and then we got onto the general subject of Kajis, of which, for the average urbanite, there are two broad types: those that are *mitiuri* (mythical) and those that belong to *zhargoni* (slang). From such a perspective, Kajis are mythological first because they do not exist in the normal sense; they have no home in the disenchanted ontology of modern naturalism, belonging neither to the opposed domains of material reality (nature)

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nor religion (supernature), they rather belong to a superseded, backward, and superstitious mythology of animism (Descola 1996). Kajis are also mythical because they are not creatures one could believe in personally, but instead belong to the category of reported speech; Kajis belong to someone else's mistaken or outmoded beliefs. If you believe in Kajis, you are either a small child, superstitious, insane, or perhaps have assimilated Kajis to an Orthodox religious cosmology as a kind of devil. Kajis dwell in the superstitious minds of peasants as something that lives in the woods or in caves and torments rural Georgians, especially those that are not aware that there is no such thing as a Kaji. Such urbanite views about these "superstitious, animist" beliefs have been hegemonic since at least the socialist period, and they elicit great deference among rural people, who do not want to be labeled as a "superstitious peasant" (cf. Stewart 1991, 116–34; 2014). Consequently, village residents I have interviewed sometimes show great hesitation in describing such creatures and assigned such statements to quotations of tradition: "They say, I didn't say this, that the ruins of houses in the mountains and in the forests, there, they say, evil spirits dwelled." The "mythical Kaji" is an anthropomorphic being which keeps company with a bestiary of other monstrous or fantastic beings which all have remained on the margins of the villages of Georgia: small, child-like creatures called Chinkas, monstrous multiheaded horned ogres called Devis, and nymph-like succubi called Alis. Most of these creatures can be defined as monsters in terms of an unstable set of monstrous physical and moral properties, including human-animal hybridity or inverted or simply anti-human or anti-cultural features or behaviors (for a survey of which see Musharbash, Chapter 1 herein), which are often exchanged between different creatures and act as general signs of the monstrous (cf. Stewart 1991, 162–91; 2014). They are also definable as monsters because they have largely hostile or predatory relations with humans; however, these relations are specific to individual kinds of monsters and act to differentiate them.[1] However, generally speaking, words like Chinka and Kaji do not seem to conjure up clear concrete images or relations for urbanites.[2] When I asked urban Georgians what a Kaji or Chinka looked like, they generally drew a blank, saying something about a Kaji having horns and a Chinka being sort of small.

The other Kaji, the "slangy Kaji," is no longer a fantastic anthropomorphic being but a real human, and has much clearer associations for city-dwellers than its mythological counterpart. This Kaji is no longer found near villages but only in cities. It is no longer found listed in a folkloric bestiary but in a dictionary of slang (Bregadze 2005).[3] Here the Kaji keeps company with another group of beings, called by names like *goimi* (hick), as well as a series of horned creatures: *jikhvi* (ibex), *rkiani* (horned one),

rkiani Kaji (horned Kaji). A Kaji, in this strongly derogatory sense, is defined largely by not knowing, or not caring, about general norms of urban civilized comportment. A Kaji is a person out of place, a person who had crossed some major social boundary. As Nugzar put it succinctly, a human could become a Kaji either by being a recent arrival from the village, in which case it was the enactment of village norms in the city that makes one a Kaji, or through a sudden elevation in rank, or coming into a lot of money (*nouveau riche* urbanites), in which case it was the way the person had moved in social hierarchy that made them a Kaji.

It would seem that there is no way to compare the two, a creature of village myth and a creature of urban slang, an unreal being with real horns, a real being with metaphoric horns. But I want to suggest that the way the Kaji haunts the village parallels the way the Kaji haunts the city. Just as there are forest Kajis and water Kajis in rural areas, so there are village Kajis and city Kajis. I want to suggest that the Kajis of the city are descended from the Kajis of the village, that they migrated to the city along with other humans. In fact, they *are* the other humans who migrated to the city. How can we establish symmetry of explanation between the categories of mythology and the categories of metropolitan slang?

To do that, I will show how the Georgian city is haunted by the village in the same way that the forest haunts the Georgian village: The Kaji, a general figure of alterity, a general purpose Other, steps into the haunter role for every new haunt. Like other modern cities, the Georgian city is a spectral city. Not haunted by metaphorical cosmopolitan ghosts that explore a "generalized structure of haunting" of an equally generic "spectral" or "uncanny modernity" that is the same in London, Paris, or Tbilisi, but by specific local goblins whose hauntings, like real urban ghost stories discussed by Luckhurst, point to a "specific symptomatology and its specific locale" (2002: 542, see also Musharbash, Chapter 1 herein; and see Foster 2012 for a specific example). But what specific properties does the Kaji have that allow it to migrate from one specific haunting to another? In the first section, I will explore the alterity of the Kaji as relayed in Georgian folklore as an absolute outsider or stranger to the civilized life of the village. In the second, I will show how nineteenth-century Georgian urbanites were haunted by the image of the backward peasant as an outsider and stranger, and conveyed this haunting by metaphorically conflating superstitious Georgian peasants with the objects of their superstitious beliefs, the Kajis. In the third section, I will show how this conflation is completed with the Georgian urban slang term Kaji used to convey a sense of the postsocialist city as haunted by new kinds of outsiders and strangers, including both peasants who have come to the city but not adapted its ways and social outsiders who have become new political and social elites (cf. Presterudstuen, Chapter 8 herein).

The Village Haunted by Kajis

The only thing the urban Kaji and many of its friends (*jikhvi*, *rkiani*) have in common with some of the contemporary folkloric Kaji is that they seem to have horns and also, perhaps, a penchant for aggressive and inappropriate behavior. In rural usage, too, the term Kaji can be used derogatively of humans in the collocation *tkha da Kaji!* (goat and Kaji!) to describe a restless, aggressive person—aggravated and slightly wild, like a goat. Goats are horned like Kajis, and both goats and Kajis are also defined as being somewhat aggressive and wild. It is very common to use the liminality of the goat, "the least tame of all domestic animals" (Vernant 1991, 203), as a model of a specific kind of alterity, and monsters and demons frequently borrow their visual iconography from goats (Stewart 1991, 182–3; 2014). As we will see below, the Kaji occupies the same relative social and physical distance from the household as the goat (cf. Leach 1964). So, both kinds of Kajis at least share a common iconographic feature (horns) and a moral feature (aggressive, wild, uncivilized). In both the city and the village, the term can be used to describe a "mythical" creature from folklore or in "slangy" or metaphoric reference to actual humans (*tkha da Kaji!*). The horns, of course, are real on the village Kaji, and are only metaphoric on the city Kaji, which is a human whose alterity is a matter of interiority.

Interestingly, while the Kaji is a potentially physically monstrous creature, it is seldom depicted in earlier folkloric collections as having horns. In the earliest folkloric description of a Kaji I am aware of, the Imeretian (West Georgian) Kaji as imagined in the late nineteenth century appears to have had spines covering its body, not horns. Moreover, the Kaji was aware of, and horrified by, its own monstrous ugliness:

> A Kaji, in the viewpoint of the folk, is similar to a man and with a big enormous body, ugly to look at and it expresses horror itself at its own appearance, it has a body covered in hair, and, of course, does not wear clothing; on its chest it has spines, which, when it becomes angry, it releases.
>
> (Korneli 1888, 1)

According to more recent folkloric collections, like Apolon Tsanava's *Georgian Mythology* (1992), the Kaji shares physical features of monstrosity with other creatures in its spectral ecology, the Ali (a succubus-like creature usually imagined as a young woman with extremely long, usually tousled, hair, appearing naked, clothed in rags, or dressed in a white dress) and the Chinka (a very small, child-like creature, usually naked).[4] Virtually all these spirits have a basically human form: The Ali is always female, while both Kajis and Chinkas can be male or female. The Kaji might rarely appear in the form of a beautiful woman (like the Ali), or, as above, have a

horrific appearance. Other features it sometimes shares with the Ali include having a reversed foot, speaking backward (with reversed semantics, so that "come!" means "go!"), and appearing untamed. Sometimes the Kaji is characterized by having long, overgrown nails on its hands and feet, which is suggestive of further parallels, since both Alis and Chinkas can be tamed by cutting their (presumably overgrown) hair and nails.

Kajis, however, cannot be tamed in this way or any other. The best one can hope for with a Kaji is that it will go away. Each of these creatures often exchanges properties or behaviors with another, but an invariant property of Kajis is that they cannot be domesticated. According to one legend, a woman who discovered a (rare) female Kaji sleeping with her husband caused her Kaji rival to go away by washing her hair and setting her hair in curls! Female Kajis are somewhat rare, but when they appear they share some of the sexual behavior of the Ali. However, even here, a significant behavioral boundary is maintained: The very kind of act that would civilize and domesticate an Ali (grooming) can only act as an apotropaic act to send a Kaji away. Grooming a female Kaji is parallel to the masculine sociable acts of uttering the opening of a greeting exchange or offering wine (sociable drinking) which banish a male Kaji. The Kaji is an anti-social being, it cannot be socialized, and quintessentially human social actions (grooming, greeting, commensal drinking) drive the Kaji away.

Virtually any of these creatures might be said to inhabit the woods, but only Kajis have particular haunts, either caves in high cliffs, ruins, abandoned houses and villages, and other desolate and deserted places. The Kaji, too, is represented as inhabiting different environments: there are "forest Kajis" and "water Kajis" (which are less harmful) (Korneli 1888, 1). The haunts of the Kaji have in common only that they are exterior, wild or deserted places, defined in opposition to the inhabited space of the village. Here the Kaji is particularly opposed to the Chinka, which is a domestic spirit:

> The folk do not really know where the Chinka lives, but the Kaji, in the opinion of the folk, lives in big cliffs, caves and desolate places, in creeks and in water . . . The Kaji is very distinct from the Chinka. The Chinka is more like a domestic/interior [*shinauri*] creature and does harm to domestic animals, objects and furniture, the Kaji, however, is wild/exterior [*gareuli*], it does not come near the house and does not harm anything domestic [*shinauri*]; it harms the man himself, if a Kaji runs into a man on the road, it begins to wrestle with him, if it defeats him, it doesn't kill him, but it really '*daaquebs*' (*daamtrevs* ["thrashes"]) him.
>
> (Korneli 1888, 1)

These creatures stand at different places in a topology of social and physical distance of the same sort that Edmund Leach (1964) used to classify

human and animal alterity in his classic analysis of taboo. The Chinka is a strangely intimate, or rather *overly familiar*, spirit. It is usually depicted as a child-like creature with a penchant for home invasion and, most disturbingly, it always knows your name. If domesticated, it becomes your unwilling slave. The Ali is a sexual Other, similar to a Greek Nereid, exhibiting "a licentiousness that exactly opposes the reserve and decorum that young maidens should ideally display" (Stewart 1991, 176; 2014). It stands at a middle distance, relations with it follow the pattern of marital exogamy; if domesticated, it can even become a man's (unwilling) wife. The Kaji, by contrast, is a completely anti-social stranger: something one encounters in exterior places, such as on the road, the haunt of strangers par excellence, and all the concrete relations one can have with it (simple avoidance, greeting, drinking, fighting) are those one might have with a potentially hostile stranger on the road in the woods. Just as the Kaji avoids domestic spaces and things, so too it cannot be domesticated even if it is caught:

> Even though a Kaji can be caught, still it cannot be domesticated, that is, it cannot be kept at home by cutting its hair and toenails, as for example with a Chinka. The folk do not remember such an example of anyone managing to domesticate a Kaji. Whoever catches a Kaji, it is said, that Kajis will never again come near anyone of their surname.
>
> (Korneli 1888, 1)

While the Kaji is the incarnation of a certain kind of alterity—the absolute *stranger*—it is also, in spite of its occasional monstrosity, very much imagined in an explicitly anthropomorphic fashion, having both sexual dimorphism and sexual reproduction. Indeed, in an early Georgian text discussing Kajis, Shota Rustaveli's epic poem *The Knight in Panther's Skin*, composed in the twelfth century, the Kajis are simply epic villains, they have magical powers but exhibit no physical monstrosity: "they are fleshly men like us" (cited in Manning 2012, 249). Moreover, they are the most *social* of all the goblins. The anti-society of the Kajis has all the attributes of a human society:

> From this example, by the way, it also appears, that the Kaji by his actions and manner of living very much resembles a man. The Kaji is tall in body, portly and has small arms, [but] like a man he has customs: lamenting the dead. So consider the following, that Kajis even have a political order and life, too. They have the very same sort of elders as in the society of men; they have one main elder, whom all Kajis pay respect to.
>
> (Korneli 1888, 2)

Thus, the Kaji, the most socially distant from humans and potentially the most physically monstrous, is also paradoxically the most human and most social Other (see Funk, Chapter 9 herein, for a comparable paradox).

These creatures form a set of anthropomorphic others which taken together represent an inversion, an anti-model, of the age and gender categories of human society (the Ali is a marriageable young maiden, the Chinka is an adoptable child, the Kajis comprise all the age and gender categories of human society). For the most part, their physical monstrousness is minimal, their lack of civilized grooming and dress is matched by the alterity of their habitats, which are typically wild or deserted exterior places, typified by the woods. However, the uncanny humanity of the Kaji is displayed in the fact that their preferred haunts are other primitivist human, or ex-human, habitations: caves in cliffs and ruins, abandoned places of erstwhile human dwelling (resembling, in this regard as well, the Nugabig, see Thurman, Chapter 2 herein).

The City Haunted by the Village

If peasants defined human society by the alterity of creatures like the Kaji, for the nineteenth-century urban intelligentsia—whose main historical mission and self-definition involved writing about peasants (Manning 2012)—beliefs in such creatures in turn defined the alterity of backward, benighted peasant society to enlightened urban society. Any description of Kajis was embedded in complex, dual-voiced intelligentsia genres like "correspondence from the village," "folklore," "ethnography," or "mythology." Writers of the intelligentsia, schooled in these newly fashionable genres of realism and naturalism, depicted the backward conditions and consciousness of the peasants by writing factually realistic representations of their reported speech. In these realist narrations of peasant life (Manning 2012), the "quoting" voice of the intelligentsia frames the "quoted" voice of the peasant so that the unenlightened alterity of the peasant to enlightened urban society is represented by simply reproducing their own words: The "subordinated linguistic space" of quoted speech becomes a "space where *alterity* is constructed, highlighted, and neatly kept apart from the self" (Inoue 2006, 92, original emphasis).

At the same time, distinctions of genre made by the peasants between different kinds of narration, each with different kinds of monsters, are erased. Peasants clearly distinguish between *araki* (fables) and *zghapari* (fairy-tales)—unreal, "once upon a time" narrations in which one generally encounters Devis but not Kajis—and *naambobi*, which are potentially factual narrations or legends that include encounters with Kajis, Chinkas,

and Alis and which are always narrated as real events affecting real (named) people living in real villages, including narratives told in first-person involving people related to the narrator. Yet in the "quoting voice" of the intelligentsia, all these "quoted" narrations and genres are reduced to fairy-tales (cf. Inoue 2006, 54), re-presented as examples of backwardness: either a mistaken peasant consciousness about nature and animism, in which non-human natural forces are represented as the product of animistic agencies like Kajis, or unreal figments of the imagination mistaken for real entities (false beliefs, superstition). All these peasant narratives are really fairy-tales because Kajis do not exist either in nature or supernature any more than Devis do. Until such narrations were embedded within respectable social scientific discourses like folklore, mythology, and ethnography (as the sample above), the Georgian intelligentsia only retold such peasant stories with obvious reluctance and embarrassment as evidence of the benighted state of the peasant who told them:

> Among the Rachans [Racha is a mountain district of West Georgia] superstition is very widespread. Apparently different phenomena of nature have frightened the people and it has created ideas about the existence of some sort of evil men of the forest, which they call Kajis, Chinkas and Witches [*kudiani kali*, literally "Women with Tails"]. I want to relate here one story [*naambobi*] about these inhabitants of the forest, and I ask the reader, if he has ever heard fairy-tales [*zghaprebi*] like this one, that he omit this section and not trouble himself with reading it.
>
> (Ukhimerioneli 1868, 1)

For the urban intelligentsia, the reality of the Kaji is that it is a product of the benighted superstitious animist consciousness of the peasants, which the enlightened urban intelligentsia have as their historical mission to transform. The Kaji, then, is indeed a "mythological" figure, because mythology (including here ethnographic and folkloric reportage) is always a kind of quoted speech; it inscribes a relationship of alterity between the *logos* ("quoting voice") and the *myth* ("quoted" narrative) it describes, which always belongs to someone else. Mythology is always double-voiced. For the peasant, perhaps, these "quoted" narrations delineate an exterior space of alterity of Kajis in deserted spaces (woods, ruins, caves) opposed to the civilized human order of the village, which cannot be easily assimilated to a simple division between nature and culture. For the "quoting" narration of the intelligentsia, these alleged "truthful narrations" about the Kaji delineate an exterior space of alterity of the peasantry in the village opposed to the civilized enlightened order of the city. The Kaji stands to the village as the peasant stands to the city; stories about the Kaji are about the village, the mythology of the Kaji is always about how the city is haunted by the village.

The Kaji in the City

When used to describe an urbanite, Kaji moves a further step, from denoting an exterior *object* of false consciousness (superstitious peasant beliefs in horned goblins, implicitly in contrast to the enlightened urbanite who knows there is no such thing) to the interiority of the *subject* of false consciousness (e.g., an urbanite who does not behave according to urban norms). As my friend Nugzar pointed out, there are really two kinds of such Kajis in the city. The first are those who have crossed the spatial boundary between the village and the city without changing their behavior appropriately. Peasants are no longer only found in the exterior spaces of the village. After a long period in which socialism restricted movement of rural people through a system of internal passports and urban residential permits (see Manning 2009a), with the end of socialism rural populations moved *en masse* into the city in what must have seemed like alarming numbers, changing the cultured environment of the city into "a big village."

The second are the new elites, *nouveau riche* and other *parvenus,* whose movement in social space indexes new kinds of social mobility brought by capitalism. Their presence is registered both in the physical changes to the cityscape wrought by unregulated "wild capitalism," and the abrupt shifts in established orders of hierarchy and prestige created by these conditions, including the displacement of socialist urban intelligentsia by the capitalist *nouveau riche.*

These two sets of changes came together with the end of the socialist order, meaning that the city increasingly became a place in which traditional urbanites no longer found themselves at home (Manning 2009a; 2009b). In the nineteenth century, rural villagers were defined in opposition to the urban intelligentsia by their beliefs that the deserted woods, caves, and rivers were inhabited by semi-monstrous uncivil creatures like Kajis. Contemporary city-dwellers imagine themselves surrounded by an *urban desert* inhabited by uncultured or uncivilized Kajis of various kinds (see Manning 2009a). Like Kajis, these strangers to the city lack basic attributes of socialist urban civilization, what was called in the socialist period *kulturnost* (or in Russian, "culturedness"), a complex set of norms of public comportment, including hygiene and grooming, *savoir faire*, as well as knowledge of *kultura* (high culture), that typified the respectable socialist urbanite (Manning 2007; 2009a; 2009b). If the Kaji is alien to the cultured world of the respectable city-dweller, then it is equally alien to the anti-world of urban criminals, where the term is used to denote the opposite of the slang term *dzveli bichi* ("old boy," one noted for knowledge of criminal and urban slang [*zhargoni*], as well as intimate knowledge of the city and its streets). For both these (overlapping) urban sets of norms

(see Manning 2009a), these strangers to the city are like the Kajis of the village in that they cannot be domesticated simply by cutting their hair and nails, or washing their hair and giving them curls.

The Kaji serves as a catch-all figure for all these new strangers. Much more than the other slang terms like *goimi* (hick), which simply denotes a lack of knowledge of appropriate norms, the term Kaji is particularly freighted with a sense of specifically *agresiuli* (aggressive) behavior or attitudes toward existing norms. The arrival of the Kaji in the city (the slang usage dating from around this period) is a sign of the chaos within the postsocialist city and the collapse of the normative order of the socialist cityscape. There was a sense that the exterior public spaces of the city had become a kind of wilderness, which commentators explored by using figures like packs of abandoned dogs and feral cats as figures inhabiting the new cityscape (Manning 2007; 2009b). In such a period of rapid change, even established social distinctions between "new" and "old" urbanites collapsed, affecting both the street corner society of the "old boys" and the high culture of the respectable citizens (Manning 2009a). One character in a story comments "in general, recently everything has gotten old so quickly, that you see yesterday's Kajis are already old [boys] today," that is, a person arriving in the city the day before already pretends they are a quintessential (underworld) urbanite, an "old boy."

Writers of the intelligentsia are similarly alarmed at the changes wrought in their city by the collapse of the socialist norms of urban comportment and civility that define the *mokalake*, a term meaning both city-dweller and "citizen." Arguing critically that the city has been abandoned by the patronage of the state to the untrammeled and unregulated forces of capitalist development, they use the figure of the Kaji—noted for its tendency to inhabit abandoned (*upatrono,* that is, lacking a patron, owner or parent) human spaces—to represent the plight of an abandoned or orphaned city as analogous with the way *eshmakebi* (devils) are said to take over (literally "become a patron to") abandoned churches:[5]

> And, if citizens (in the non-political sense of the term) are not equipped with a morality fitting the rules and order of city life and a desire for good works for the city, as the Georgian proverb puts it, if devils take over an abandoned church, an abandoned city becomes the property of Kajis.
>
> (Abrahamishvili and Bolkvadze 2003, 29)

As a concrete example of what the term Kaji means for contemporary urbanites, recently a Georgian Internet interview program aimed at teens,[6] hosted by a dreadlocked Georgian hipster named Billy (Bili), took on the question of asking young people "What kind of *adamiani,* [human, person]

could be a Kaji?" Some urban respondents resorted to ostensive definitions, describing either general areas of dress or comportment in which *kajoba*, or Kaji-ness, is indexed, or a list of specific characteristics, often including aggressiveness and lack of *savoire faire*. Some respondents, however, doubted that anyone could be called a Kaji, or laughingly insist that the term only has a "mythical" referent, or treated it as a descriptor of a certain transient style of behavior rather than a kind of person:

> Billy: What kind of person is for you a Kaji?
> Interviewee 1 (young woman): [laughs] You know, you make out a person's *kajoba* first and foremost from the way they are dressed, from the way they speak, uh, I dunno, from everything. At a glance, you sense about a person that this is a Kaji.
> Interviewee 2 (young man in company of Interviewee 1): [dimissively] No one is a Kaji.
> Interviewee 3 (young woman, seated in park): A Kaji? Someone who doesn't know, maybe, uh, mistakes idiocy for freedom, that sort of person. [laughs] Another is one who doesn't know when they ought to behave normally and when not.
> Interviewee 4 (young man seated in park): Pointy shoes, sporty pants, uh, has a cigarette, a *novosti* [electronic] cigarette, here [gestures to behind his ear], wears an old bandana with a skull on it.
> Interviewee 5 (young woman on central street downtown): A Kaji? [laughing] Mythical!
> Interviewee 6 (young woman on central street downtown): I don't know. Sometimes . . . No one is a Kaji all the time, everyone is a Kaji sometimes, sometimes no one. Sometimes I am, sometimes, perhaps, you are, but no one is a Kaji all the time.
> Interviewee 7 (young woman on central street downtown): A Kaji is someone who does not know when and where they ought to behave how, or engages in self-realization incorrectly, in my opinion, or expresses their emotions and experiences in a maximally rude or coarse way.
> Interviewee 8 (young woman on central street downtown): A Kaji? Is a *goimi* [hick]!

In the slang usage of these urban elites, the Kaji could be anywhere, but it is in matters of style and presentation, including everything from clothing to speech to (frequently aggressive) comportment, that the Kaji is recognized.

The term has a critical resonance in a political discourse that has been, since the end of socialism, strongly characterized by (sometimes covert) opposition between the city and the countryside (Manning 2007; 2009a; 2009b). For example, one potential presidential candidate, Salome Zurabishvili, famously announced her political ambitions by making a

rather cryptic but resonant comment in a speech before a large rally in October 2005 to the effect that she wished to show that "in Georgia, Kajis do not come, they go," in apparent reference to the leaders of the ruling Rose Revolutionary Party (*Civil Georgia*, October 20, 2005). She soon became strongly associated with this cryptic phrase, which quickly became a popular "meme," even though no one, it seemed, was very clear on what exactly she meant by it, and hence it has been used in turn with all manner of different political meanings (e.g., Ramishvili and Chergoleishvili 2014). Often as not, it was reversed. For example, one commentator (Ignatova 2012), confessing that she did not know what Salome meant by the phrase, reversed it to portray a Georgia from which Kajis were not departing, which she defines as an optimistic proposition, but actually arriving in large numbers:

> If we look into it more realistically, I think that Kajis are not going, but rather are coming. They come and they come! They come aggressively. With overweening self-confidence . . . They come everywhere, starting from television, ending up with politics . . . They come and . . . implant their own views, criteria, taste, aesthetics, values. More exactly, by compulsion, by force, completely without tact and without asking, they implant them in us.
> (Ignatova 2012)

The term Kaji, displaced onto the political arena, becomes a floating signifier to define a group of elites who seek to implant their false system of values in society *aggressively* (by compulsion or force). The specific referent chosen to be characterized in this way will vary; the point is that the denotation of the term (in both slang and political discourse) always contains a component of *aggression* toward shared urban norms and values.

The alterity of the political Kaji is not ultimately a matter of externalities (neither physical monstrosity, nor grooming, nor comportment) but internalities; it is a condition requiring careful social psychological diagnosis to explain the external aggressiveness of the type. Here the political alterity of the term is regrounded in the implied social-psychology of the slang use of the term. Another commentator (Ramishvili 2011) uses the term, for example, to characterize a certain politically inflected group of *parvenu* elites (the specific referents need not detain us here). Allowing that the term was a potentially offensive one, inasmuch as "its definition was made up by central-urbanites of the city and bears a certain exclusionary character," he still desired to use it because "no other term better expresses" the characteristics of the people under discussion:

> Come, let's try to explain what is *kajoba* and who is a Kaji.
> This is a personal condition, which is conditioned by an inferiority complex. Let's say that in the depths of my heart I know that I am not a full

> (fully valued) member of the society which I am rushing towards. For example, I am not a central urbanite, I don't have "city" pronunciation, my parents were from a low social stratum. Instead of not caring about this and attending to my own affairs, I experience the aforementioned [feeling] and I try to somehow squeeze my way into the elite. I'm not a "prof" of my line of work, so I jury-rig my career through intrigues and cheating. One of my tools is also sycophancy. In short, I fight ferociously to take my place. It goes without saying that I have no sense of self-irony.
>
> (Ramishvili 2011)

From this basic psychological profile the author then deduces a whole range of fears, desires, and undesirable behaviors, including radical conformism, a lack of talent, taste, and professional qualifications, as well as a lack of shame at being characterized in this way. At the same time, the Kaji is plagued by fears, whether walking down Rustaveli Prospect (Tbilisi's central district) or at home in bed, that "everyone knows the story of your *kajoba*, that it is written on your face" (Ramishvili 2011).

Thus, the political Kaji grows out of the standard urban Kaji. They come from the same places, they arise from the crossing of boundaries either of social space (from the village to the city) or social hierarchy (rising from low origins, entering a career at which one has no talent or qualifications—crucial for the discourse of the intelligentsia). The term expresses, in short, the disdain of the urban intelligentsia for these outsiders.

Conclusion

Urban Georgians explicitly treat the urban Kaji as *merely* a slangy redeployment of the village Kaji. But I wish to argue that the two Kajis are really one Kaji adapting to two different times and places. They have much in common. Both terms can be used in metaphoric usage to speak of actual humans (in utterances like *tkha da Kaji*!), and both of these "slangy" extensions are grounded in the shared properties of a single mythological figure, evidenced by the fact that both village and city Kajis currently are characterized as having horns and being unruly and aggressive (both of which properties show affinity for animals, particularly goats). A constant across the two Kajis is that they together form a single complex of using an image of alterity in contrast to a normative self characterized by domestication and civilization, a self surrounded by encroaching states of savagery threatening to the self's position. The Kaji, wherever you find one, is a stranger to your ways, and it displays this alterity by lacking the grooming, dress, and comportment of a normal person. Moreover, it is aggressive and cannot be domesticated. These two latter traits are linked; the Kaji in both cases aggressively displays its

alterity, and shows equally aggressive hostility to the shared norms that define the civilized state by which the village separates itself from the woods, the city separates itself from the village, and the urban intelligentsia or established central urbanites separate themselves from social upstarts and *parvenus*.

The real differences between the two arise in part from the way the Kaji adapts, not to the city, but to the modern naturalist order (whose home is felt to be the city), in which monstrous others have been banished to the status of fairy-tale creatures. The Kaji had to become a human to move to the city. But it was not a long road to travel, the village Kaji never really had many monstrous traits, other than magical powers, that would separate it from humans, and it shows many human social properties. You could say it simply exchanged unkempt hair and untrimmed nails for bad taste in clothing. The main difference, then, is the *internalization* of the Kaji; the Kaji moves from being a "scary thing out there" to being a "scary thing inside," a monstrous creature taking human form whose monstrous properties are a matter of social psychological diagnosis.[7] The urban Kaji is openly hostile to the established norms of the city, and the political Kaji even seeks to destroy those norms. But this Kaji is as terrified that its secrets (its low social origin, its lack of qualifications) might be written on its forehead as the village Kaji is horrified by its own ugliness. The Kaji, then, expresses abjection; not only a "scary thing outside," strangers *in* the city but not *of* the city, but also a "scary thing inside," the fear that one might be a Kaji oneself. It becomes an internal monster that urbanites are seeking to expunge from themselves. This, then, is the "specific symptomology" of the Kaji in relation to the "specific locality" it has come to haunt. The Kaji in the city is a symptom of the massive and ongoing changes and crises of the postsocialist city, as a set of once-accepted norms of civilized behavior appears to be constantly under aggressive attack by Kajis (see also Fredriksen 2013). The Kaji moved to the city at the same time as urban residential permits were abolished at the end of socialism, and villagers and their haunters came to haunt the city. Urban modernity, in Georgia as elsewhere, defines itself by unceasingly generating new forms of alterity, abjection, and exclusion (that which urban modernity has cast aside: the rural, the past, the old) (Inoue 2006), ceaselessly providing new ecologies of abjection, new niches for the Kaji to haunt (see Musharbash, Chapter 3 herein; cf. Foster 2012 on the flexible haunting of modernity by the Japanese *tanuki*). The specific symptomology and locality of the Kaji is its paradoxical relation of presence and absence to the modernity toward which it is always coming, but to which it can never fully arrive. The Kaji is thus, paradoxically, very "modern."[8] With each new crisis of sudden political and economic change in the city, a new variety of Kaji is born. Kajis are coming, and they keep coming.

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Notes

1. See Fogelson (1980, 147–8) for an anthropological cross-cultural classification of monsters that separates out what he calls "semantic" and "pragmatic" "features" of monstrosity, that is, monstrosity defined in terms of (inverted, liminal, etc.) physical, moral, or characterological properties of the monster, versus monstrosity defined in terms of its anthropophagous or predatory relations to humans. This opposition is more or less similar to what Descola (1996, 87–91) calls "modes of identification" and "modes of relation". For the combinatoric redeployment of such classificatory features in the construction of completely new monsters in Internet forums, "reverse ostension," in quasi-folkloric or "folkloresque" creations like Slenderman, see Tolbert (2013).
2. Throughout I simplify Georgian orthography by omitting apostrophes to mark glottal consonants for ease of readability, as well as Russian apostrophes which have a different diacritic function. I capitalize the names of all Georgian folkloric creatures for the sake of consistency.
3. For other contemporary invocations of Georgian folkloric creatures like the Chinka in another context see Manning, 2014.
4. Tsanava's 1992 collection consists of transcriptions of Georgian folklore from various rural regions of Georgia. The sections dealing with Alis (1992, 55–61) and Kajis (1992, 64–70) were mostly transcribed in 1980 with informants of about eighty years of age, the sections dealing with Chinkas (1992, 107–9) were mostly transcribed in 1968 with informants of the same age.
5. The term *eshmaki* (devil) does not generally denote a folkloric creature but is usually used, as here, in reference to a creature of Orthodox religious cosmology. Kajis are seldom called "devils" in my experience, but see Fredriksen 2013.
6. The full interview is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v = sOpe6-c6Bm0. Accessed May 18, 2014.
7. I thank Michael Foster for this formulation.
8. I thank Miyako Inoue for this formulation.

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Chapter 11

The Workings of Monsters: Of Monsters and Humans in Icelandic Society

Helena Onnudottir

Vestfirðir (Westfjords of Iceland) is the large north-western peninsula of Iceland, which consists of high mountains and deep fjords. It is the most isolated and sparsely populated part of Iceland. Geographically the oldest part of the country, it is also the place which Icelanders see as the perfect environment for trolls and giants. For over 1,100 years, Icelanders have amassed a plethora of diverse monsters, good, bad, and in-between; this diversity can be tested against Cohen's (1996) *Seven Theses* categorization. These monsters live on the land, within the land (and water); and they are the land. They also live within Icelanders, at times in the form of protectors, at times as adversaries. Such monsters enter the lives and minds of Icelanders in different ways and their place, meaning, and effectiveness are diverse. On the one hand, the powers of Icelandic monsters can be displayed and affected through fear, deceit, and natural catastrophes, while on the other hand their powers can be negotiated and leveled to the benefits of human and "monsterkind." Like the land, these monsters cannot easily be categorized (Cohen's Thesis III) and at the same time they both represent and reveal Icelandic history, culture, and society (Cohen's Thesis I).

As a child growing up in Iceland, I learned about the four Vaettir (protectors) of Iceland. They come in the shape of Gridingur (bull), Gammur (griffin), Dreki (dragon), and Bergrisi (rock-giant) and are entrusted with the task of protecting the land—north, south, east, and west respectively—from external forces. Over the years, the symbolic meaning of the Vaettir, and their place in Icelandic mythology, history, and

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psyche, have settled in my mind, but my earliest feeling for them was awe of their size, for they are all giants. However, while Vaettir are giants which present no harm to the people of Iceland (although they may harm those approaching the island with ill-intent. For a comparative case, see Thurman, Chapter 2 herein), there are other giants which turn a baleful gaze toward Icelanders. Jötunn, Tröll, and *Þursi* are giant monsters with a particular taste for human flesh, preferably that of children. While it could be argued that such monsters may serve a useful function in any society—particularly from a parenting point of view—I contend that these monsters hold a place more dynamic and essential than that of disciplining children or warding off external peril. My claim is that Icelandic monsters are not only part of the land, but are also perceived as innate to its people; they bridge the space between the external and the internal worlds of the Icelander. They locate Icelanders in their land and provide the means for the creation and maintenance of Icelandic identity.

In this chapter I want to take you on an auto-ethnographic journey through the Westfjords in order to provide evidence for these claims. While the actual travel took place in 2009, the journey has temporal dimensions that date back to my childhood. Past events, mingled with contemporary social and cultural aspects of contemporary Icelandic society, constitute the setting for this journey. I must state that this chapter is not an "autoethnographic life review" (Ellis 2013, 43); rather, it is a visit to places of myself. I draw on personal experiences, stories told by close family, on popular culture, and on the myths of the Icelandic people. This combination allows me to rotate my gaze; I can look inward to my own feelings and beliefs, I can then rotate outward and locate their sources and place, and, hopefully, I can communicate them to the reader. My aim is "connecting the personal to the cultural" (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 733), and to tell you about monsters in Iceland. I explore both my own relationship to Icelandic monsters, as well as outline the nature and place of monsters within Icelanders in general. Like the land itself, these monsters are both cruel and kind.

My Feelings for Tröll: First Close Encounter

The year was 1972, and I was ten years old. My mother was out for the evening, my younger siblings were asleep, and my older cousin was staying the night. It was Saturday night, and the then sole television station in Iceland was for the first time broadcasting an Icelandic film classic, *Síðasti bærinn í dalnum* (*The Last Farm in the Valley*) (Gíslason 1950). I will always remember this night as my first "close encounter" with one of Iceland's most common monsters, Tröll (trolls). I emphasize the term "close encounter,"

as from a young age Icelandic children become familiar with Tröll and other creatures who roam the cultural, mythical, and physical landscapes of Iceland. By the age of ten, I had heard my share of popular stories about Tröll, Huldufólk (the hidden people/elves), Draugar (ghosts), Dvergar (dwarfs), Drekar (dragons), and Ófreskjur (synonym for monsters), and I had been told stories by my mother, aunts, and grandparents about their own personal encounters with Huldufólk. Like most Icelandic children of that age, I was intrigued and awed, but also relatively comfortable with the existence of such creatures. That Saturday night in September 1972, my fairly placid feelings changed as two gigantic Tröll were projected into the living room, and into my soul.

The film is set in a beautiful valley in Iceland where the eternal fight between good and evil is played out between humans and Tröll. The (evil) Tröll—a male and a female—seek to rule the valley, and to this end they have chased off all the valley's farmers except for one, Björn, who lives with his two children and their grandmother. The grandmother has in her possession a magic ring, given to her by Huldufólk, and through the powers of this ring the family has managed to resist the various attacks by the Tröll. Realizing the existence of the ring, the Tröll decide that they will temporarily transform themselves into humans and trick the family out of their possession. Without cutting the story too short, as I watched parts of the film through my fingers, I can tell you that with the help of a Huldukona (elf woman) and a friendly dwarf, the Tröll are exposed and good—the family—prevails. At the end of the film, peace is restored to the valley, albeit not necessarily restored to me; the beauty of the Huldukona, the cunning of the children, and the wisdom of the grandmother linger in my mind, and the cackles, as well as the enormity, of the Tröll still conjure darkness in my consciousness. I need only close my eyes to see clearly the shape of a human shifting and growing into a bellowing troll as he scampers from the farm back toward the hills after his first attempt at stealing the ring.

During the last forty-two years, these two Tröll have numbered among the many monsters in my mind. They have journeyed through life with me, mostly concealed in the masses of other creatures I have come across in my life, occasionally and at odd moments finding their way to my waking consciousness. However, as I did some background research on this particular film for this chapter, I discovered two interesting facts. First, the film is no longer the obscure Icelandic black-and-white production that I viewed, and which brought devious, shape-shifting Tröll into my mind. *The Last Farm in the Valley* has acquired a cult status and has been travelling the circuits of film festivals in the United States. It has just featured at the Film Society Lincoln Centre's "Images from the Edge: Classic and Contemporary

Icelandic Cinema" (April 2013), where it was described as "a wonderfully light-hearted tale of the supernatural [which] digs deep into local folklore and legends."[1] This quote brings me to the second fact. While I accept the reviewers' contention that Óskar Gíslason produced this film for Icelandic children, I struggle with accepting the label of "light-hearted," where good conquers evil. It is true that the child heroes in the film are calm and confident, drawing on a persistent and stereotypical image of Icelandic children at home in Icelandic landscape (see Pálsdóttir 2002)—such images were particularly powerful when the population still lived on the land, prior to mass movements by Icelanders to towns and cities (see also Manning, Chapter 10 herein)—and the Tröll are defeated by the combined efforts of the Huldufólk and humans. Still, for me, good has not necessarily prevailed over evil, at least not in the classic fairy tale "and they lived happily ever after" sense.

The child in me encountered the Tröll with hands in front of her eyes—clear evidence of fear. Still, she found it hard to accept the Tröll as simply "evil monsters." The Icelander in me will argue steadfastly that Tröll are not just evil, they are much more besides. Tröll are huge, scary, devious, and deceitful and, yes, some of them have a taste for human flesh, so they can be scary monsters. They can also be aligned with Cohen's (1996) Thesis IV as monsters of conflicting feelings and emotions. Tröll are also silly, clumsy, helpless, and at times helpful. The latter applies particularly to some female Tröll who have been known in the past to lend a helping hand to farmers (Þorvarðardóttir 2006). Hence, as a child I was already exposed to the paradoxical nature of monsters; how can they be defined, understood, and contextualized? Cohen proposes "seven theses towards understanding cultures through the monsters they bear" (1996, 4), stressing the fact of the monsters' "ontological liminality," which resists "attempts to [be] include[d] . . . in any systematic structuration" (2006, 6). My Tröll would like Cohen's text and agree with his claim that monsters do not adhere to simple binary oppositions; like the culture that feeds them and the humans that fear them, they are not simple.

While I'm delighted to find that the rediscovery of this classic Icelandic film has brought my Tröll out of obscurity—it has taken "my Tröll" to Hollywood!—the good/evil binary has pushed me to further explore my feelings for and relationship to Tröll. Unlike some classic or stereotypic giant monsters—for example, Grendel in *Beowulf*, some of the Cyclopes of Greek myths and even Godzilla—Tröll do not fit snugly into the category of "bad," and they do not necessarily sit outside of or on the dark side of human society. Apart from sharing the land, Tröll have a place in my mind and being, and in the mind and being of most Icelanders. And while I admit my fear of Tröll, and accept that they may be called monsters,

I feel that they are *my* monsters; that their place in the Icelandic landscape, as I discuss below, and their firm place in contemporary culture (writings, songs, and stories) generate forms of affinity which might in other cultures be associated with undesirable members of one's family. Furthermore, Tröll are complex monsters (like other creatures), not all Tröll are the same, and they need to be understood, respected, and feared in their own social and cultural context. Before I explore this context and my place in it, I provide examples of the ontological realities of monsters and people in Iceland, where different belief systems merge.

Of Land, People, and Monsters

Monsters, ogres, and supernatural beings have always been a part of imagined Iceland landscape of humans and more. According to both myth and the Sagas, some arrived in the company of humans, while others are thought to have inhabited the landscape since time immemorial. Such beings are integral to the connection between Icelanders and the land, they are the essence of "Icelandic-ness" (Hafstein 2000; see also Presterudstuen, Chapter 8; Thurman, Chapter 2 herein). These beings are a part of everyday life: They reside in the landscape; they inform our language and communication; they occupy our dreams; they travel with our ancestors and our children; they shine through our songs and stories; and they live in our minds. Monsters and supernatural beings are equally found accompanying Icelanders in the Sagas of the past as they are found inhabiting popular culture in Iceland today. And, like the people of Iceland, these beings have ways of coping with the forces of Nature, forces which have as much to do with darkness as with cold (see Heijnen 2005). As a place included in the category of "lands of the midnight sun," Iceland is equally a land of the dark; the twenty-four hour daylight of summer months is matched by twenty-four hours of darkness during the depths of winter. Summer is the time of light, when people maximize waking hours, hiking across the vastness of the center of Iceland and playing midnight golf; winter is the time of darkness, when people retreat inside homes, cars, heavy clothing, and dreams, when the landscape becomes the playground of trolls and other monsters.

For well over a millennium Icelanders have shared and negotiated their landscape and the lingering darkness with other creatures. Furthermore, the Icelandic landscape is renowned for its harsh, barren (particularly when it comes to trees), and at times alien landscape. One needs only Google the words "Icelandic landscape" and up pop blog sites with statements like: "Creepiest landscape on Earth . . . if you like being scared,

go to Iceland."[2] In 1965 and 1967, US astronauts visited Iceland to develop observation skills in recognizing particular geographical structures prior to visiting the Moon. And in 2012 and 2013, North Americans were again in Iceland to film parts of the global television phenomenon, *Game of Thrones*. It will not surprise many that Iceland provided the location for filming the scenes taking place "north of the Wall," a lawless place of ice, stone, and ancient magic, where mythical creatures and the living dead rule. It is easy to demonstrate that Iceland is the natural home of Tröll, as well as creatures alien, scary, and dark. It is possible to argue that this "otherness" is to a certain extent incorporated into "Icelandic-ness": the sense of being, as a sense of the particular and the peculiar internal to Icelanders.

For me as an Icelander, it is not difficult to detect this "incorporation"—the "otherness within." On a summer-long visit in Iceland in 2004, I spent time with my family in a summerhouse in the west of Iceland. As is typical for Icelanders in summer, all members of the family spent as much time as possible outside. The kids explored uncultivated land and caught small fish in the stream. The older people did much of the same, but I also engaged in a typical conversation with my mother about the landscape around us. We sat on the veranda and the mountain Skessuhorn (the peak of the female troll, Skessa) towered on the horizon to the east. We watched the few clouds in the sky circle the peak and pondered the fate of Skessa. As the story goes, this peak belonged to the ill-tempered Skessa, who resisted the introduction of Christianity and the subsequent building of a church in the area. Due to her aggressive attacks, including rock-throwing at local farmers and families—evidenced today by massive rocks strewn around the church grounds—the local farmers united and took up arms against Skessa, who fled. Since that battle, Skessa has made no move on humans, yet her peak is a constant reminder of her presence. My mother and I discussed the active and aggressive role of Skessa in some of the tales of the past, while we also felt her as a familial companion as we relaxed on the veranda on this sunny afternoon. It is only now, a decade later, that I think of this afternoon as something different or other as I reflected on my life for examples for this chapter. This natural, familiar feeling for Skessa is something I had not consciously explored before. For me, the landscape in Iceland is normal, yet not plain. I can feel it as unruly, mystifying, and simultaneously inviting at any given time, and its commonly highlighted barrenness and isolation does not scare me; isolation is not an issue when you share in the landscape with creatures like Skessa.

Certainly geographic isolation is one factor shaping modes of livelihood, social organization, and culture in Iceland, and natural disasters and diseases have also had their impact. Over the centuries, the population of Iceland has been decimated a number of times, including by the Black

Death, and as a result of volcanic eruptions (Karlsson, 2000). And survival has at times meant both adjustment to and adoption of creatures and forces of dubious character. Humans, non-humans, and nature are closely interwoven in Iceland, where over the centuries a particular ontological framework of people, monsters, and nature has emerged; a particular form of endurance and "Icelandic-ness" (see Hastrup 2004). Still, Iceland's geographical isolation has not excluded Iceland and its human and non-human inhabitants from external ideological forces.

Christianity arrived officially in Iceland in the year AD 1000 (or AD 999 according to some records). The worship of the Norse gods, the Æsir, was permitted as long it was conducted in private (Jochens 1999). The old religion soon retreated—albeit formally reinstated in Iceland in 1973—and the mythical creatures of the old merged with both the landscape (nature) and with Christianity. Throughout the centuries, Icelanders have survived encounters with natural and supernatural monsters, and creatures recorded in the Sagas and other documents. Icelanders are fortunate enough to have written accounts of the first century of human settlement in Iceland in *Landnámabók*.[3] The manuscript has survived in various forms in five later Sagas and details the people and processes of the settlement on the land, including snippets of personal stories and accounts, and concentrates on people, familial relations, social relations, and land ownership. The manuscript does not give us much on monsters and supernatural creatures. The earliest recorded story of non-human creatures and monsters in Iceland is contained in *Heimskringla*,[4] a history of Nordic Kings, which includes the account of Landvættir (protectors of the land)—also referred to as Vaettir (protectors)—creatures of might, power, and stature who apparently inhabited the land long before human settlement.

While this image of the monsters of Iceland has inevitably transformed over the course of time—at times posing as a deadly threat to humans and at other times as the protectors of humans—the central place of giants, monsters, and supernatural creatures in Icelandic identity and being is still prominent.

Nation, Religion, and Supernatural Beings: The "Normalness" of Huldufólk and Enormity of Tröll

The Landvættir are still an essential part of Iceland. These giants populate the Icelandic national emblem where they group around the national flag, which, like all the Nordic national flags, represents Christianity in the shape of the cross. The official image of Icelandic national identity is one which combines the forces of nature (represented in the colors of the

national flag), a symbol of Christianity, and four monstrous beings. However, the relationship between the various monsters and mythical creatures and the people of the land is ambiguous, and not always harmonious. The Landvættir now reside comfortably on official buildings (on the Icelandic emblem) and the local currency, and have a secure place in history books, children's stories, and folklore. They belong to the past and the present and, in the Icelandic sense of self, must be defined as mythical and historical creatures of great symbolic value. Additionally, there are three creatures of myth and the supernatural which are still actively engaged in Icelandic social and cultural lives: ghosts, Tröll, and Huldufólk. The last two of these groups are most clearly connected to Icelandic land and tradition, and are at the core of my analysis.

Huldufólk (the hidden people) in Iceland are unlike elves or fairies in other lands and cultures. They are not small, nor do they possess physical features like tails or horns which might be characteristic of the elf outside of Iceland. Hafstein describes Huldufólk as

> people, different from humankind, that live alongside the human population and resemble it in most respects. They are alike in appearance—in body, stature, and in costume—and their economy is of the same sort: like humans, the hidden people have livestock, cut hay, row boards, flense whales and pick berries. Like humans, they too have priests and sheriffs and go to church on Sundays. (2000, 89)

Hafstein's description of Huldufólk does not conjure an image of monsters. Indeed, Icelanders are quite fond of their Huldufólk and tend to treat them with respect (see Heijnen 2005). Icelandic folk stories and tales contain copious accounts of communication and cooperation between humans and Huldufólk—as well as stories of relatively innocent trickery and jests—and over half of the Icelandic population believe in Huldufólk (Gunnell 2007). The Icelandic Huldufólk are recognized and honored on four festive holidays during the year (some predating Christianity) with bonfires, dancing, and singing. As Hafstein argues, Huldufólk, like humans and other creatures, have their place in Icelandic nature and society, perhaps closer to nature than society.

> Elves [Huldufólk] represent nature in the heart of culture; the places attributed to them are wilderness in the midst of cultivation . . . These places—rocks, hills, ponds—are taboo, they must not be fished in, messed with moved or mowed; they must not . . . be brought into culture. (2000, 89)

The existence of taboo places is well known in Iceland, and proper "elf etiquette" has been passed down for generations in many families.

My family has its own collection of stories of encounters with ghosts, elves, and other creatures. Since I was very young I delighted in the story of my mother meeting the Huldukona, who lived in the rocks below my grandparents' small farmhouse. Like most Icelandic children of that time—the 1930s, when the bulk of the population still lived on farms in rural settings—my mother had been taught respect for Huldufólk and the need to treat their places and dwellings accordingly. One summer day when my mother was a little girl, she was playing near the Huldufólk rock and when she turned around she saw a woman with a horse standing next to it. As my mother stood there and stared at the two, the horse turned around and made as if to buck. Used to horses, my mother turned away. When she regained her feet she found that both the woman and the horse had disappeared. Evidently, the Huldukona did not want my mother to see her and the horse enter the rock—though humans have visited the world of Huldufólk, the means of moving between the two dimensions is not known to most people—explaining the action by the horse (see Thurman, Chapter 2 herein). Though my mother never saw the woman or horse again, my aunts have their own individual accounts of such meetings.

My mother's father had great respect for Huldufólk and all other creatures of the land, and apparently the respect was reciprocated. Many people—not only members of my family—have told me about the spirit (usually linked to Huldufólk) which followed my grandfather. For a number of years my grandfather held the role of *landpóstur*, one of a number of national postmen, which meant that he, at times with a horse, travelled across parts of the west of Iceland delivering the mail. He would be away for days, but the family always knew when he was close to returning home because a bright blue light moved up the mountain side before his return (the family house was situated some way up the mountain). My grandfather's blue light is an example of *fylgja*, a guardian spirit, and assumed by those who knew him to have been given to him by the local Huldufólk.

However, Huldufólk are not unambiguously kind and good; they can get angry. The headline of an article in the *Icelandic Review* in June 2011 stated: "Angry Elves Said to Have Wreaked Havoc in West Fjords." This headline referred to the Huldufólk of the mountain of Bolungarvik, near a small town in the Westfjords. For the previous months, major construction work involving tunneling through the mountain had been underway. In June, various mechanical failures and misfortunes had struck the workers on the site and on June 23, 2011, an explosion misfired, scattering rocks across parts of the town. Fortunately no one was outside on the streets at that time, so no people were hurt. The townspeople had no doubt about what, or who, was behind the mishaps: the Huldufólk. Interestingly, the people of the town had already become aware of the anger of the local

Huldufólk, and the previous day a meeting had been held between two of the contractors, the local pastor, and a seer named Vigdís Kristín Steinþórsdóttir. Vigdís had visited the construction site the day before the accident and had this to say:

> I had been [in the mountain] before with other people who sensed the natural beings weren't content with the disturbances to the ground and [the beings] hadn't been asked to move. We sensed they were sad about it. I wanted for us to apologize.
>
> (Iceland Review Online, June 24, 2011)

Vigdís also claimed that neither had the humans asked permission of the mountain dwelling Huldufólk before they started to dig a tunnel through the mountain, and stated that one of the Huldufólk had been killed during the dig, which to her mind explained the sudden rise in mishaps on the site. During the ceremonial apology, the mayor of the town did not attend. Though Vigdís was disappointed that members of the town council had refused to join her in the visit to the mountain, a number of workers joined the apology—even those who claimed no belief in the existence of elves—and Vigdís was encouraged by the reaction of the townsfolk. The local people officially called upon the town council to issue a public apology to the Huldufólk for the disturbance and destruction of their dwellings. And, as the town council continued dragging its feet, a group of locals got together, turned off the construction machines and combined efforts in the forms of prayers (Christian), callings (non-Christian), and songs (Icelandic folk music) to seek peace between Huldufólk and humans. One of the town residents, Benedikt Sigurðsson, believed music might be the answer, saying "I have been asked, by both elves and humans, to reach concordance on this matter, and I hope to be able to do so with these songs" (*The Reykjavik Grapevine*, June 30, 2011).

These stories draw attention to the Icelandic appreciation of Huldufólk. The action and reaction by the people of Bolungarvik indicates not only that Huldufólk are experienced by Icelanders as real, but also that they have powers and emotions, and affect human lives (e.g. Hastrup 2004; see also Thurman, Chapter 2 herein). The event described above is by no means unique in recent Icelandic history. The clearest evidence for anyone questioning the reality of such encounters between people and Huldufólk is the construction of some central roads in the greater Reykjavik area: roads which weave around rock formations that could have been dealt with by dynamite but for the fact that Huldufólk dwell there. The latest encounter between humans and Huldufólk came before the Supreme Court of Iceland in December 2013. A major road project

had been halted as the Court ruled on its impact on Huldufólk habitat (*The Independent*, December 23, 2013). Clearly, Huldufólk have a specific place in Icelandic society. Tröll are another such force and due to some of their characteristics—physical appearances, domestic arrangements, personal hygiene, and eating habits—many might see them as simply scary monsters, particularly children.

Tröll in Iceland have one thing in common, they are all big. Furthermore, Tröll are only one of the species of giants known to Icelanders, and all combine in creating a dominant impression of fearful monsters. Jötunn, Tröll, and *Þursi* are all terms which conjure images of giants with a particular taste for human flesh, preferably children, but a closer look reveals significant differences between them. Jötunn refers to the giants of the Nordic origin myths, like Ymir, the first living creature. Ymir gave birth to humans (a female and a male) from his armpits, after which he was killed by the arch-enemies of his race, the Nordic gods, and his body was used to make the Earth (Þorvarðardóttir 2006). You might still find Jötunn in Iceland; he resides in the mythical realm of the Nordic gods, found in some of the Sagas written before the advent of Christianity. Risi (*Þursi*) is a term used for the giants of European fairy tales—many of whom have been tackled and overthrown by common men turned giant killers, some of them simple lads like Jack. Creatures such as Risi have not found residence in Iceland, perhaps due to the domination and/or resistance from Tröll. Like Huldufólk, Tröll appear in the image of humans, though they are much larger and more spectacular than mere humans.

Tröll live in the land (rocks), they live in caves and crevasses and, unlike their cousins, Jötunn, they do not live in prosperity (Þorvarðardóttir 2006). Tröll are poor, they are generally rough and uncouth and they can be violent. The most famous Tröll family is that of Grýla (a giant female troll), her husband Leppalúði, and their sons, the *Jólasveinar* (Jule Lads or Icelandic Santa Clauses). This mixed family of Tröll and rather crude Santa Clauses is a relatively recent addition to the troll population in Iceland. Grýla is of ancient stock—reference to her can be found in the *Edda*[5]—and she only became a mother to the Jólasveinar late in life (in the seventeenth century). Grýla is renowned for her appetite for naughty children, which obviously gives her a functional role for parents in the modern day lead up to Christmas. In my role as the aunt of young children I realize Grýla's power and venture with care into the graphic world of Grýla and Leppalúði at the time of bedtime story-telling. The forceful entries and formidable dance etiquettes conducted by Grýla and Leppalúði's sons at children's Christmas dances every year only strengthen this scary image of our Tröll; Grýla and her family are a part of contemporary life in Iceland; they visit human dwellings, towns, and cities every year from mid-December into early January.

Another type of Tröll are the Nátttröll (night-trolls). The University of Iceland has one of the most famous stories about them on its website:

> Once up on a time, a family of Nátttröll lived in *Kerlingarhnjúk* [a mountain peak in the Blue Mountains peninsula in the south] . . . One winter, as the day was shortest, the family in *Kerlingarhnjúk* decided to head to *Hafnarfjörður* [a small bay in the south of Iceland] to collect some meat from a whale which had beached there. As the sun sank in the sea in *Faxaflói* [a big fjord in the south of Iceland], the Tröll—mother, father, daughter and a grown son, followed by their dog—set out. Their trip down the lava field was smooth and fast . . . As the Tröll arrived in *Hafnarfjörður* they found that other Tröll were also seeking whale meat and some time was spent arguing and negotiating shares in the whale. Finally, matters were settled and the family from *Kerlingarhnjúk* received a generous share. The family then set out on the trip home, but now the travel was slow and uphill. The whale meat was heavy and not easy to handle . . . The father, carrying the backbone of the whale, travelled slowly. The family also needed to travel a fair distance around *Helgafell* [a mountain], as it belonged to other creatures [Vaettir] not of their family. It appears that the family had made miscalculations or they travelled slower than they had anticipated, as when they came to the top of the hill of *Austurhnjúkum*, they walked into the first rays of the morning sun. The dog, who had been running ahead, was the first to turn into stone. As the family saw this, they made a desperate attempt to retreat down the hill, but could not outrun the sunlight. All members of the family turned to stone; the mother and the children stand to the east of the hill and the father sits to the west. It is apparent that, as the father realized what was happening, he sat down and there he sits today. This story has passed down the generations amongst the Tröll in the mountains above *Hafnarfjörður*.
>
> (Translated and adjusted by me from Vísindavefur Háskóla Íslands 2013)

This event supposedly took place before humans settled in Iceland (AD 874), so the particular reference to the various places in the landscape are of interest. These places locate the family, their dwelling, and their journey over the landscape, and it can also be argued that the story is literally written in and of the land. Today, you can follow the map laid out by place names and easily locate the Tröll in the landscape (see also Morton Chapter 5 herein).

One October Weekend in the Westfjords

As an Icelander who has lived abroad for close to twenty years, I have not lost any of my feelings for Tröll and my assumed rights to place and belonging in the landscape of the Tröll. After a summer visit home in 2009, I set

out from Reykjavik with my partner for a trip of about 1,100 kilometers to and around the Westfjords. My partner has visited Iceland many times, but this was her first time in the Westfjords, and I was eager to introduce her to the unique environment of the oldest part of Iceland. The Westfjords are renowned for a spectacular landscape dominated by high table mountains, which plunge into the North Atlantic at the edge of the Arctic Circle. It is also known for its isolation, roaring storms, and icy waters often dotted with icebergs. Human settlement in the Westfjords consists of a number of towns, most of which are situated on narrow stretches of flat land at the foot of the mountains, and often cut off for months at a time during snowy winters. The coastline is indented by a number of greater and smaller fjords, which means travel by road is slow.

We set out on our trip on the first weekend of October in a small car—a golden Nissan Micra—and travelled through the day without mishap. As night was approaching, we had long passed Hólmavík (a town on the south-east shore of the Westfjords) before we realized that the car was very low on petrol. As the tourist season had ended there were no petrol stations open until Súðavík, a town just before Ísafjörður, our first destination. The red low petrol light appeared when we assumed there were still a good hundred kilometers to travel. I say "assumed" because we only had an old road map and simply could not figure out exactly which little fjord we were entering.

Tension grew. Darkness had fallen, rain and wind beat on the little car, and we were getting anxious about not making it. This is when I called on my Tröll; all I needed was to look inward, connect to my experiences of the past, draw on the stories of my family, and reach out to the Tröll who towered over us in the landscape around. I sought the ineffable powers of the Tröll. The reader might question my ability and efficacy in calling on Tröll, and my answer is that I knew I could. Hastrup claims that "in human life, there is always both something that we *know* and something that we simply *sense* or feel . . . knowledge is what a person uses to interpret and to act in the world" (2004, 457, original emphasis). I drew on my "knowledge tradition," my "Icelandic-ness."

And, with the red petrol light glaring at us, we continued through the dark and the rain around two more fjords (ca. one hundred kilometers) before arriving in Súðavík. My Tröll had heeded my call. I realize that many will simply argue that a Nissan Micra is a fuel efficient car—which is true—and that the red petrol light might have been an eager one. Still, no one can convince me that my Tröll did not hear me. While my partner was thrilled that we made it to Súðavík, she was also a bit skeptical about the role of the Tröll. However, after three days in the Westfjords, when we had driven through a number of mountains (the first stage of the tunnel in Bolungarvik being one of them), when we had visited Flateyri with its

massive U-shaped wall of protection against avalanches off the mountain (erected after the avalanche of October 1995, which leveled part of the town and killed twenty people), when we had attempted to take on the powers of the wind on Látrabjarg and crawled out to the western-most edge of Iceland (and of Europe), her feeling for the nature of the Westfjords was kicking in. The powers of nature, the powers in the landscape, and the workings of the Tröll in the mountains surrounding us were coming to light.

In her thesis *History, Landscape and National Identity*, Anna Heiða Pálsdóttir claims: "Believing that elves live in the landscape, being awed by troll figures in the lava, is being Icelandic" (2002, 302). This does not merely mean that Icelanders look at the landscape, point at a shape of rock and say: "It could be a Troll." Rather, Tröll, Huldufólk, monsters, and supernatural beings—their nature and their actions—are the idiom through which Icelanders know and name their land, and their relationship to that land. Huldufólk are capricious and ambivalent, Tröll are huge, powerful, and clumsy—a useful idiom for a land that regularly spews forth lava, swamps villages with avalanches, and produces wind gusts that rip off roofs. To call this the work of Huldufólk and Tröll is to bring unpredictable and powerful nature into the realm of the knowable and the, at least to some extent, controllable. These, then, are the workings of my Tröll.

Notes

1. This review was taken from http://www.filmlinc.com/films/on-sale/the-last-farm-in-the-valley. Accessed September 4, 2013.
2. Quoted taken from http://www.environmentalgraffiti.com/featured/creepiest-landscapes/15802#XhqsddfvkdOyZ6Dt.99. Accessed September 8, 2013.
3. Written by Ari Þorgilsson (1068–1148). For more information, see Encyclopædia Britannica Online, s.v. "Landnámabók," accessed September 12, 2013, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/329391/Landnamabok.
4. Written by Sturluson [1230?]. For more information, see *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Heimskringla," accessed September 12, 2013, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/259670/Heimskringla.
5. Written by Sturluson [1320?]. For more information, see Encyclopædia Britannica Online, s.v. "Prose Edda," accessed September 12, 2013, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/479346/Prose-Edda.

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Chapter 12

Afterword: Strangerhood, Pragmatics, and Place in the Dialectics of Monster and Norm

Rupert Stasch

The chapters of this volume are a rich ethnographic primer in the importance of monster figures in human societies worldwide. They also illustrate that the reasons humans are so absorbed by these figures are also why monsters are a privileged resource for anthropological understanding. Around monsters, people are in exceptionally charged contact with their own conditions of living culturally and historically. Previous literature has addressed this issue in many registers, and this book's contributors acknowledge and draw upon prior work from several disciplines. Yet in anthropology, scholarship on monsters has been quite dispersed, despite the existence of a strong tradition of work on witchcraft and many excellent accounts of other monsters in specific settings. The current unprecedented volume—and the dense thematic connections across it—invites a fresh attempt at stocktaking. What are the canonical issues of an anthropology of monsters? What are the canonical issues of anthropological analysis generally, that monsters are so vividly "always trying to show us" (Kearney 2003, 121, quoted by Morton, Chapter 5 herein)?

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Order

A basic starting point is what can be termed the condition of "normativity" or "order," and its historical and cultural variability. People live guided by senses of order. They have ideas about what should be done, what should exist, and what perceptual experiences are expected. The monsters that stalk the pages of this book express this condition of normativity through its violation. One trait of most monsters is that they are ferociously destructive of human life and well-being, often through direct acts of killing or other bodily harm. Thus, central normative commitments of human communities that the monsters violate include norms of the definition of social coexistence as axiomatically a matter of helping one another flourish, rather than destroying one another. But even ideas of what it is to flourish, or how such flourishing could be achieved, are culturally variable. In this area and others, the characteristics of a given monster turn out to be organically linked to the *specific* normative commitments organizing the lives of people who are harassed by that monster. Musharbash, Thurman, and Onnudottir draw on eloquent statements of this theme by the philosopher Carroll and the literary scholars Auerbach and Cohen. But all chapters engage practically with this classic problematic of the monstrous as the other to the normative, through their method of constantly contextualizing a monster's attributes within a wider field of norms of the people troubled by that monster (see also Brightman 1993, 136–158). For example, Morton's chapter (herein) provides a sustained account of Arrernte people's monsters as the antithesis of moral imperatives of care and generosity in kinship. Funk notes that Anito spirits' attraction to sickening smells is the opposite of the norm of daily self-cleansing, and that Anito incarnate qualities of personhood deviating from the explicit vernacular category of "social norms and behavioral etiquette of the Tao people." Hundreds of other details recounted in this volume illustrate this sense in which a monster is a walking anthropology. Anthropologists today often hesitate to generalize strongly about how any people's lives are organized, and repudiate strong visions of autonomous normative or classificatory systems advanced by figures like Durkheim or Lévi-Strauss. Monsters are a salutary topic because they are so much of a piece with normativity as a real feature of people's lives that they draw analysts into renewed engagement with normative order as a core anthropological problem.

Meanwhile, though, the chapters of this book illustrate that a methodology of linking a monster's attributes to features of the broader social order in which the monster circulates does not need to assume a model of normative order as a recipe or grammar that people live entirely *within*.

The attributes of a monster are not only a mirrored inversion of people's positive norms, but also often a metanormative site where people orient reflexively to their own order, as partly external or contingent rather than an entirely assumed frame of their lives. Monsters can be channels of people's active engagement with the relativity of their own normative commitments, and with tensions in the very idea of living by an order or norm.

This metanormative side of monsters' force may be part of what leads monsters to be a focus of evaluative ambivalence. Many of this volume's chapters address the often-noted pattern that monsters are a focus of desire as well as fear (cf. Moretti 1983). Burnt Woman's face is half-beautiful and half-disfigured, and Alimardanian reports that her terrifying overtures toward men also carry an undercurrent of excitement. Onnudottir recounts about her own relation to Tröll that "while I admit my fear of [them] . . . I feel that they are *my* monsters," and that people feel for them "forms of affinity which might in other cultures be associated with undesirable members of one's family" (cf. Allison 2006, 192–232; Foster 1998, and others on Pokémon and on "cuteness" in Japanese monster culture generally, as well as the similar historical transformation of European "fairy" beliefs). Mixed emotions of fear and desire often go with a broader *moral* ambivalence of "good" and "bad." Morton explores the paradox of Arrernte people's everyday repulsion toward certain malignant and deformed beings who nonetheless in cultic contexts are positively identified as sacrosanct founders of ancestral Law. A sentiment of admiration may have partly colored the thinking of a woman from Bandjalang whom Alimardanian quotes as saying "Oh, Burnt Woman! She owns the mission; she rules the mission." Even when monsters are not explicitly figured as objects of desire or as valued divinities, the very intensity of people's attention to them and elaboration of imagery about them amounts to a kind of positive emotional and moral investment.

There are a variety of imaginable ways to explain why monsters might be attractive as well as terrifying, within the overall problematic of the monstrous as the other of the normative outlined above. One would be the Durkheimian theory about transgression of norms, namely that societies get the deviants they deserve (to bend a statement from Bubandt 2012, 7 quoted by Presterudstuen, Chapter 8 herein). Violations of order that people imagine and focus on are structurally related to those people's core normative commitments, and collective experience of cases of transgression deepens people's clarity and commitment about norms. An alternative account would construe a norm as itself an ambivalent structure that *includes* the possibility of transgression as a force of its own, not entirely reducible to the positive norm. Affirming a rule also creates the desirability or efficacy of its negation, such that any normative order necessarily

throws up shadow orders "outside" the main one, that are yet in a partly constructive relation of mutual dependency with the other order rather than just violation of it.

Another variation on this analytic theme might begin from the problem that a normative order generally cannot give an account of itself. Such an order consists of historically and culturally contingent commitments that are lived in part as semi-conscious presuppositions. This affords an attractive power to the idea of something outside a system that can explain and justify it, or that disruptively provides people a relation to their order different from presupposition of it. This train of reasoning is well-adapted to explaining institutions of stranger-kingship, representations of morally dissolute tricksters as world-creating divinities, and other patterns in which a monster attracts an evaluatively positive aura of the sublime (such as the grotesque demon-slayer discussed by Haddon, or again the case examined by Morton).

Monstrous transgression might also draw people into deeper confrontation with contradictions, unexamined assumptions, or internal violence of their norms (e.g. Munn 1986, 215–233). Eickelkamp notes that Mamu turns hunters into hunted, involving a closer look at tacitly pivotal aspects of a hunting society's life glossed over in other contexts. Musharbash describes Kurdaitcha among Warlpiri as drawing into focus the everyday terror of high Aboriginal mortality within the settler colonial formation, a normative order that should not exist, but resolutely does. Morton and Funk, in different ways, examine how a collective order may appear to be founded on rejecting destructive modes of action like anger or aggression, while at certain other levels actually valuing them as socially necessary.

It might also be that through some monsters people genuinely relativize their normative commitments, peering into the abyss of a space beyond norms, or a space of heterogeneous normative possibilities. In contrast with the rather "flat" Durkheimian idea of normative order as the unfree living of rules, there is an alternative Weberian vision of a social world of *values* and people's orientations to them, in which an open relativity of commitments is internal to routine life and to normativity as such. The figure of the utterly bad monster condenses in exaggerated form the experience that normative life is a matter of ideas about what is *good* (as Funk's account of Tao people emphasizes). Further, monster figures and their evaluative volatility condense in exaggerated form the coexistence of mutually conflicting desires and ideals, the contingent exercise of faculties of judgment about how to realize these desires and ideals, and the ways that social conditions and other difficulties may foil the realization of ideals even when people try to act toward them (Robbins 2013; Laidlaw 2014).

All these varied models of a possible structure of relation between monster and norm are accounts of how there is sometimes a special truth in a subject's relation to a monster, compared to the experience of thinking and acting more squarely *within* normative presuppositions in contexts untroubled by monsters.

As a last step in my initial broad introduction of a problematic of monsters and normativity, I would like to consider monsters' emphasis on continuity between "order" as a matter of perceptual or physical form, and "order" as a matter of actors' mutual moral standing through adherence to rules of conduct. Monster figures tend to merge social perversion and betrayal with bodily deformity and perceptual anomaly. Their social actions of killing, thievery, or incivility stand in relations of strong iconicity with their disturbingly anomalous bodily and perceptual traits (such as defecating fire, dressing in live snakes, carrying a severed leg on one's shoulder, having horns and unkempt hair, dressing garishly, or having red eyes or other red markings, to mention a few examples from this volume). The bodily anomalies are a likeness of the violence, and the violence is a likeness of the bodily anomalies.

To think about this merger of the perceptual and the moral, it may be useful to draw on a turn of analysis from the anthropology of taboo. It is well known that Leach (1964) and Douglas (1966) sought to explain taboo by reference to a structuralist problematic of classificatory order. According to their accounts, the phenomena that attract taboo are those which are taxonomically anomalous or otherwise interstitial between categories. Something that defies or scrambles categories actually challenges the integrity of a whole classificatory system, and so taboo represses that challenge. However, in a later, more theoretically and ethnographically thorough study of taboo, Valeri (2000) is able to show that behind the issue of the integrity of a categorial system is also the issue of the integrity of a human subject *for whom* those categories matter. It is not just any interstitial phenomena that attract taboo, but ones specifically violating aspects of categorial order that are also a ground of the embodied subjectivity of the persons perceiving and acting toward those phenomena.

The relevance of this turn of analysis to monsters is twofold, beyond its direct applicability to monsters in their character of being anomalies of a specifically personalistic form. First, it adds to the problematic of normativity a basic issue of "for whom?" A question of order is one and the same with a question of perspectival subjects who live in relation to that order, and for whom there is the further question of a periphery of other ways that life can be organized. The close duality of monster and norm is in reality a triangle of monster, norm, and subject. (In some ethnographic cases, we probably do not even need the detour of anomaly theory to

appreciate this: Haddon's Hare Krishna interlocutors directly locate nonhuman demonism inside their coreligionists or inside themselves, and Tao people discussed by Funk situate the dangerousness of Anito within a general ecology of human vulnerability to personal disintegration through separation from their "souls.")

A second way Valeri's reasoning is relevant to monsters is that it helps us understand the merging of bodily deformity and socio-moral violation noted above. Not only do these poetically mirror and reinforce each other, but for a subject who is internally composed of categorial schemas that are indissolubly bodily and moral, the violation of categories of bodily and perceptual normalcy in creatures of the surrounding physical world is not actually "external" at all, but is a charged path straight to the actor's own coherence or value. Motifs of bodily and physical deformity proliferate so wildly among monsters because this level of abnormality gives the figures greatest interpellative force. Violation of what is perceptually comfortable to a subject touches levels of historical and cultural being that are most naturalized and most viscerally internal to that subject's own makeup. Althusser (1971) metaphorized the relation between subjectivity and order by the image of a pedestrian who spins around in answer to a policeman's call of "Hey, you!" An alternative image is that of a person cowering in fear of the malign and deformed Jarnpa, Mamu, Arrentye, Kaji, or Tröll, who calls out in effect, "Stay away, I'm coming after you."

The Monster as Screen of the Human Stranger Field

In the remainder of my comments, I will survey three narrower themes that this volume innovatively brings into focus, within the overall problematic of monstrosity and normativity. The first is the close relation between monster figures and human strangerhood. The monster field of relations between "human" and "nonhuman" is mutually mediative with the field of social heterogeneity among different people within the "human" sphere. For example, one recurrent pattern across this volume's chapters is that of close intersection between relations with a monster and questions of interethnic strangeness among different categories of humans.

Thus, for instance, Thurman reports several ways in which her knowledge of monster figures among Mak Mak Maranunggu of Northern Australia was mediated through her interlocutors' ideas of how her own whiteness affected her standing in relation to those monsters. Mak Mak Maranunggu who belong in relation to a specific area of country protect strangers from monsters on that land through presenting sweat and speech to the monsters. Musharbash reports the Warlpiri understanding that

invisible Kurdaitcha are completely visible to nonindigenous people, but are no threat to them and do not look like the monsters they are. The stories recounted by Presterudstuen of Indo-Fijian or foreign men being approached by an indigenous Fijian woman, who is in reality a dangerous ghost, bear a similar structural relation to ethnoracial divides of the human social field. Likewise the Georgian intelligentsia's folklorization of peasant beliefs enacts a project of social distinction between urban self and peasant other, via the detour of the Kaji monster.

One pattern facilitating these interchanges between monster relations and interethnic relations may be that in many cultural settings, monsters are strongly "ethnic" in the first place. Mak Mak Maranunggu think of "cave men" as a population with whom previous humans were in conflict over country, and with whom they communicated using hand signals. They also comment quasi-ethnographically on the impoverished vegetarian diet of this group. Onnudottir discusses Icelanders' widespread understanding of the existence of a whole population of "hidden people" who live on the landscapes that humans inhabit. Korowai of West Papua, with whom I have done my own fieldwork, speak also of a population of "hidden people" living a parallel existence to humans, with whom humans must cautiously transact. Another nonhuman monster dominating Korowai consciousness is the zombie-like *laleo* (demons) that humans are thought to become after death. These beings are explicitly modeled as an ethnicity, albeit one that stands in opposition to the category *yanop* (human) rather than being inside it. Like human ethnolinguistic groups, the demonic dead are held to have their own *bolüp* (place or territory), an area of the landscape where they properly belong, far downstream from the ethnic territory of Korowai themselves.

Many authors in this volume emphasize the reality of monsters as social and epistemological presences. One reason this argument needs to be made at all is that in scholars' own locations of socialization, the major sites of elaboration of monster imagery have long been film, television, and print literature, overtly framed as fiction and mediated by mass cultural technologies. A more adequate comparative "monster" category is probably a wide one that expects monster figures to be quite continuous with workaday human social relations.

A helpful effect of the overall pattern of continuity between the intra-human social sphere and the extra-human monster sphere is that it presses anthropologists to reckon more consistently with an important feature of social worlds generally, namely that people frequently understand them to be organized as a spectrum of strangeness. The extreme polarity of normal "human" self and an abnormal "monster" on the far periphery of social relations dramatizes the more general condition of acting subjects as

looking outward from their proximal social zones of relative familiarity, across a radiating field of greater degrees of otherness (with other para-human social others like animals and machines also inhabiting parts of this field alongside monsters, following Musharbash's discussion in Chapter 1 herein). Words like "human" or "civilized," alongside the names of specific monster figures, might be understood as actually indirect names for this more basic condition of the perspectival organization of social life. Manning describes the common core of the peasant and urban versions of the Kaji figure as lying in a pattern "of using an image of alterity in contrast to a normative self characterized by domestication and civilization, a self surrounded by encroaching states of savagery threatening to the self's position." One way that living normatively is not a simple matter is that different people coexist socially who have different normative systems, or different investments in the same systems. In ideas about monsters who act or relate differently toward different categories of humans, we see the monsters working as figures of reflexivity about the *sociological distribution* of order, in addition to the other complexities of how an order might exist touched on in the previous section.

Besides highlighting the organization of social worlds as a spectrum of strangerhood, construal of monsters as ethnic groups also involves strong recognition of them as occupying a perspectival position. The more that monsters are thought about as social others, the more they are thought about as having mental processes and normative frameworks proper to themselves. A paradox of a category like "human" or "civilized" is that it signifies on two levels at once. On the one hand, it designates and affirms the normalcy of a certain organization of life, typically aligned with the speaker's own culturally particular sense of order. On the other, these categories are an element *in* a certain language and *in* an overarching normative perspective, of which this specific version of the category "human" or "civilized" is itself a metonymy. This situation is especially foregrounded in the common phenomenon of a language's word for "human" doubling as an ethnic self-designation, as when Korowai speak of their land as the "human place" (*yanop-bolüp*) and their language as the "human language" (*yanop-aup*), by contrast with the lands and places of ethnic neighbors or the faraway territory of the demonic dead. Like normative order generally, culturally and historically specific definitions of what is "human" and "civilized" tend to be circular and self-relativizing. Monsters may be reminders of that.

Even more strongly, monsters are reminders of the elements of stranger-hood ubiquitous to relations *among* humans, even in the most proximal regions of the social field. If there is a good deal of human sociability in relations with "ethnic" monster-types (like Korowai demonic dead or Mak

Mak Maranunggu "cave men"), this may be because there is already a good deal of monster sociability in relations between humans. The English portmanteaus "frenemy" and "hostipitality" are colloquial reminders of the broad anthropological pattern that even convivial social bonds tend to be tinged by undercurrents of uncertainty—if not aggression—and that intersubjectivity is built around gaps between people's consciousnesses in addition to shared content across them. Funk links Tao practices of speaking euphemistically in the presence of Anito spirits to routine verbal indirection among humans, and to ideas about people's mutual opacity of intentions. Many chapters in the volume touch on special connections between monsters and children, or developmental transitions generally. Children may be thought to be especially vulnerable to monsters' attack, to be able to see monsters that are invisible to adults or, in the case described by Morton, were formerly thought to risk *becoming* monsters if they did not undergo initiation rituals. These patterns tap into the character of socialization itself as a kind of "cultural contact," where normativity is an internally complex condition of not just the sheer affirmation of rules but reflexive engagement with their contingency and ambiguity. The character of a normative system as linked to the position of a subject who faces outward toward strange peripheries is not only an organization distributed across a spatial field of different actors, but also a temporal field of actors' passing into or out of existence, and into or out of normative commitment.

However, with respect to heterogeneity within the human sphere, the strongest pattern in this volume is the role of monsters in mediating understandings of broad ethnopolitical fractures such as the racialized indigenous versus Indo-Fijian split in post-colonial Fiji, Georgian status politics of urbanites' self-differentiation from peasants and the *nouveau riche*, or the catastrophe of settler colonialism for Aboriginal Australians (whose monsters incarnate white predation only a little less directly than the Andean figure of Pishtaco discussed by Weismantel 2005 and others). Sometimes these mediations are triangular, with human groups' difference of relation to a monster further sorting out the two *as* different, and underlining the crux of their otherness. A difference in whether two ethnic groups are even vulnerable to a monster's danger seems to involve direct acknowledgment that a monster is not an absolute entity, but the intimate other to a cultural self. Sometimes the mediations are allegoric as well: The otherness of the monster is *analogous* to the troubling otherness of a coexisting ethnopolitical bloc of human strangers, as in the parallels between Mak Mak Maranunggu "cave men" or Warlpiri Kurdaitcha and Aboriginal people's experiences of dispossession under white colonization (cf. Brightman 1990). Sometimes parallels between the relation to a monster and human interethnic relations are hardly even allegoric, as in

the case of a dangerous ghost who approaches a non-indigenous man *as* an indigenous Fijian woman.

The reciprocal mediation of monster relations and intra-human ethnic, economic, and political fractures has been an important theme in earlier work (e.g. Weiss 1998; White 2000). The chapters of this volume extend this path of inquiry to a wider variety of monstrous figures and geographic settings than has been previously considered this way between one set of covers, giving the analytic theme a new clarity.

The Pragmatic Life of Monster Categories

Another way this volume advances the anthropology of monsters is through the contributors' impressive thematization of what I will term monster *pragmatics*. The pragmatic aspects of a sign are those that involve its use, as distinct from aspects that might somehow exist as regularities entirely independent of use. A pronominal category such as "I" or "you," like spatiotemporal demonstratives such as "here" or "now," is irreducibly pragmatic because even the abstract meaning of the category includes within itself reference to a specific instance of use: The pronoun "I" means "the person who is uttering the present instance of the discourse containing *I*," while the pronoun "you" means "individual spoken to in the present instance of the discourse containing the linguistic instance *you*" (Benveniste 1971, 218). A greeting such as "Hello" is an inherently pragmatic linguistic form, since its significance has to do with reflexive ritualization of conditions of speech itself. A culturally defined genre of speech activity, such as a newspaper article, talking about the weather, or acting as an auctioneer, is a matter of pragmatics. Linguistic anthropology has generally been concerned with the elaborately systematic organization of many different pragmatic dimensions of language, and showing how pivotal these dimensions are to language systems and what these systems are to people who live by them.

Analogously, this volume's chapters make a sustained methodological and theoretical case that the pragmatic dimensions of a monster category are integral to what the category is and to how it exists. By "pragmatic" I again mean anything that has to do with a monster category's application, or all the ways that people relate to the category itself *qua* category rather than as a seamless access point to something beyond the category. Jean-Claude Schmitt, in *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, gives a helpful statement of this thesis that the ways a monster category is used are integral to what the monster is:

> To account for the facility that the living had in imagining and telling about the return of the dead, we have had to cease claiming that . . . there existed

> an immutable "belief in ghosts," an a priori given that was distinct from the subjects of the enunciation and that went without saying. It has been more useful to question the modalities of the statement of belief, the way in which the belief was never a given but was always in the process of being shaped and transformed. The documents themselves, their origin, and their generic form have therefore not been considered as illustrations of a belief completely formed outside of them but as part of the process of believing, of the complex modalities of the statement of belief in which doubt is blended with the affirmation and the concrete representation with the phantasm.
>
> (Schmitt 1998, 221)

To build up a sense of commonality across this volume's chapters in this area, I will first review a selection of different descriptive and analytic moments that deal with monster pragmatics, before then commenting in more general terms on *why* the monster field might be a scene of a kind of hypertrophy of the pragmatic.

Our authors recurrently show that the people who discuss monsters are reflexive about the exploratory, flexible, and multiply voiced character of monster categories. Eickelkamp reports several relevant patterns in Anangu talk about Mamu. For example, historically unprecedented perceptual entities such as camels, donkeys, white colonists, and the Star Wars character Yoda have at different times been seized on as models of what Mamu is, and the Mamu category seized on as a name for these entities. Among Korowai the monster category *laleo* prototypically designates a walking corpse that humans become after they die. But even while there is an elaborate standardized imagery of this feared being, virtually *anything* strange can be identified as a "demon" presence, and this protean character is itself an important aspect of the category's definition. A minor but tellingly concrete illustration of this appeal of the monster category for interpreting perceptually surprising experiences was the response of my closest Korowai acquaintance to a photo he took of a floatplane being unloaded, using a digital camera I had given him a few days earlier (Figure 12.1). He showed me the photo on the camera's screen and pointed out that a *laleo* was visible in it (cf. Wright 2008). But then he quickly adopted my alternative explanation that a pair of flip-flop sandals had been right next to his camera lens. It is in this same mode of adaptability and epistemological experimentation that Korowai applied the category "demon" to whites and all other categories of novel foreigners who have arrived on the edges of their lands across the last thirty years, while also readily revising their ideas of these new actors' monstrousness as they have gained more experience of them.

Eickelkamp similarly remarks on "the heterogeneity of, and emergent doubt about, the ontological status of Mamu" under current historical

Figure 12.1 Flip-Flop Sandals and Floatplane, Danowage Village, West Papua, July 2011, Photo by Wayap Dambol.

conditions, and suggests that Christian Anangu may describe the monsters as "a made-up story to frighten the children." Morton points out that parents' instructions to their children to avoid straying far from camps testify to "the sheer facticity of monsters for Arandic peoples," but he also notes that "in common parlance, to describe people as 'Arrentye' [a monster] is to say that they are prone to uncontrolled anger, selfishness or greed," an example of what Manning aptly characterizes as a "slangy" use of a monster category. So too Korowai use the two prominent monster categories *laleo* (demon) and *xaxua* (witch) as swearwords for expressing spite toward virtually any object, person, or situation, with a force comparable to excretion- or sexuality-related interjections in English. In the Arandic, Korowai, or urban Georgian "slangy" usages, the monster category signifies in multiple ways at once. The word evokes the idea of an actual nonhuman monster, but it is also being predicated of a human referent tacitly known *not* to be a full exemplar of the nonhuman type. The word thus also evokes the idea of a language-user's own artful bending of signs and disparagement of the human called this way.

So too, Tao people are reported by Funk to use "grunting like a monster" as a technique to quiet a whining infant, an ambiguous act of drawing on the monster's reality while being overtly deceptive in performance of it. Presterudstuen, referring to the differences of interpretation between him and his Indo-Fijian housemate about the visitation recounted at the

beginning of the chapter, notes that "Ajay and I never managed to settle our discussion about who or what knocked on our door." The wider body of stories about ghosts is likely the focus of a variety of epistemological stances on the part of people in Fiji who hear or tell them. Musharbash refers to the ambiguous overlap today of two historically distinct Warlpiri monsters as "a terminological muddle that makes perfect sense." She is referring to the shifting historical conditions that make the figures' merger logical, but her characterization also speaks to a pattern that the terminology of monster categories is often both a focus of intense typifying interest, and marked by ambiguities. To mention another minor example from my own fieldwork experience, across vast areas of Korowai discourse, the two monsters *laleo* (demon) and *xaxua* (witch) are consistently spoken of as taxonomically very distinct figures of horror, and yet several different times I have met older female speakers in whose idiolects *laleo* is fully available as a habitual way to say "witch" as well as "demon."

While numerous contributors emphasize the reality of monsters for those they haunt, Haddon's chapter (herein) on Hare Krishnas develops the theme with particular force. Their Vedic cosmology describes a progression of increasingly closer proximity between human and demonic populations, culminating in the current degraded epoch in which many humans in reality *are* demons. Haddon notes that in the understandings of his research subjects, certain of their own emotions and actions are immediately interpretable *as* demonism, a line of reasoning that runs directly opposite the secular academic idea that a monster metaphorically reflects some other condition, which Haddon trenchantly describes as "a form of demon-slaying in its own right." Yet Haddon also notes that in the context of the Hare Krishna movement's reckoning with its history of child abuse, a charged theoretical debate has unfolded within the movement over the relative reality of "child abuse" versus "demons," and over the relative truthfulness of secular liberal versus theological modes of judgment in the face of odious immorality. Internal to the discourse of those most oriented to the monsters, there is also a space of disagreement about "what there is" (Heywood 2012, after Quine).

Haddon's answer to the aporia of academic secularism is what he terms "ethnographic storytelling." His two vivid examples well illustrate how a belief in a monster is (to borrow Schmitt's earlier-quoted language) "never a given but . . . always in the process of being shaped and transformed," and that such a belief is not "distinct from the subjects of the enunciation" and "modalities of the statement of belief." Haddon's ethnographic story of Bhakta Jack is about a religious adherent for whom demons are a real constituent of his own person, but it is also a story about uncertainty and particularity. The story seems to suggest that nobody can say exactly what

form or role demons will have in any next cycle of Jack's subjectivity, just as Jack cannot fully identify the devotional pole of his religiosity with his temple community or with any master, because of uncertainty about these adequately matching his commitment to Krishna. Haddon's second ethnographic tale is of a man, David, who himself tells Haddon two stories that are one story. In the Kuala Lumpur airport, David recounts to Haddon the scriptural story of a pious man's victory over his atheistic father, through the demonic father's evisceration by lion-like Nrsmhadeva. Then David goes on to recount his meeting two days earlier with the man who had abused him as a child, and his beating of this abuser with a stick in the face of the man's insulting refusals to confess.

Among this volume's contributors, it is Manning whose analytic language most overtly aligns with my interest in the pragmatic level of monster representations, such as through his already-noted focus on slangy use of the Georgian category Kaji. By "slangy," Manning is referring to the fact that urbanites' use of the monster term to refer to gauche social climbers involves a stance of reflexivity about their own processes of sign use and sign epistemology, here in the form of bending a linguistic category for nonhuman referents to deprecate some persons known to be actually human. Jumping between Manning's account and Haddon's above-summarized encounter with the man David, I would suggest that that there is in this extended sense also a "slangy" quality to David's identification of the two stories he tells (the scriptural one and the biographical one), a "slangy" quality to David's T-shirt depicting Nrsmhadeva's claw, and a "slangy" quality to the overall dialectics of persuasion and disagreement that Haddon, David, and other Hare Krishna adherents engage in around diverse signs in David's history with the movement. Rather than a monster existing in abstract form independent of being spoken about, the very definition of the monster is bound up with the activity of telling a story about that figure under certain conditions, and with concern to know evaluative truths or persuade others of them, through telling and hearing such stories.

This genre-embedded quality of monsters is also prominent in other cases. In Eickelkamp's account of Mamu, the monster's life is linked to specific genres of talk and specific epistemological frames of experience or inquiry, such as nighttime dreams and their recollection, or recountings of singular events in the life of some individual, that have already been narrated many times since their original occurrence (cf. Tolbert 2013). The ghosts in Fiji discussed by Presterudstuen seem to live most prominently in the "urban legend"-like space of being discussed by people who did not directly experience the events, may not know the individuals involved, and may lack certainty about the epistemological status of what is being recounted. Monsters are also surrounded by reflexive notions about real

consequences of talking about them, and rules about such talk. Tao people avoid talking about Anito spirits, because such talk draws them to the speakers. To Hare Krishna adherents, to recount and discuss scriptural stories is to participate directly in the being of the depicted figures and cosmic struggles. The genre of folkloristic ethnography produced by Georgian scholars is itself an efficacious double-voiced discourse, defining the urban self as rational through close contrast with the portrayed peasant who believes in mythic Kaji.

Manning's further argument, though, is that the urban "slangy" usage and the rural usage are fundamentally the same. His chapter (herein) "establish[es] symmetry of explanation between the categories of mythology and the categories of metropolitan slang." What I have sought to suggest in the preceding paragraphs is that across all of this book's chapters there is an impressively consistent pattern of ethnographers discussing the conditions of enunciation of monster categories, in close tandem with the imagery of those categories. This pattern means in effect that all uses of monster categories are "slangy." Questions of category-users' sense of *how* they are applying the monster category are never far from the force of *what* the monster category designates.

This importance of the pragmatic dimension of a category's life to its very makeup and force is something linguistic anthropologists and others have emphasized with respect to virtually every communicative element in human social life. But given the theme's prominence across this book, it might be worth considering the possibility that something about monsters draws their conditions of enunciation into even more salience than is the case with other cultural forms, and that this "something" has to do with the relation between monsters and order that I thematized much earlier. As walking violations of normative order, who (as Musharbash puts it) "rupture classification," monsters are paradoxical categories for what is refractory to categorization. As we have seen from examples like my friend's photograph of a flip-flop sandal, part of the expectation about monsters is that their exact character is unknown. Funk states that across different Tao social groups, "there is no fixed canon about malicious spirits," and adds further that, "this lack of definition makes beliefs in the Anito even more effective and powerful." This category-defying, metacategorial aspect of monster categories entails that thinking about them involves a focus on the *activity* of categorization itself (Williams 1996). Perhaps even more than in other areas of categorizing activity, engaging with a monster means contemplating reflexive questions of what a category is, what the relation between category and categorized object is, and what kinds of epistemological and socio-political conditions surround and ground category use.

This point can also be put in a language of "token" and "type." A token is a situated singular instance in space and time, distinct from an abstract generality across different instances. Categories are types, and so monsters are figures who violate the order of types. Thus, while monsters are themselves also a focus of typification, there is something in a monster that draws thought more fully into a space of token/type wobble, where the ambiguity and irreducibility of *this* moment, *this* phenomenon, *this* situation is strongly asserted as a condition of categorial order in general. The intensity of the token level in monster experience is helpfully condensed in the much-remarked etymological connection of "monster" to *showing*, a demonstrative scene where categorial order is again intrinsically in *use*, and where there is necessarily a sense of tension, creativity, and depth to the relation between categorial order and its full processual environment in space and time. Yet monsters are connective as well as demonstrative: Their quality of "showing" involves pointing to presences and possibilities beyond what is clear at a given moment, and pointing to a flood of possible meanings activated by the monster's reflexive highlighting and short-circuiting of categorial order. Monsters provoke cascades of inference and association, as well as a sense that *more* knowledge and more actions would be desirable if only they were in people's capacity. Part of the volatility of monsters seems to lie in how they conjoin token-level specificity of the singular event with a sense that foundational typicalities of whole worlds are also in play.

There is a close relation between this theme of the hypertrophy of the pragmatic around monster categories, and the earlier-outlined theme of fields of strangerhood. The "my" of Onnudottir's "I feel that they are *my* monsters" is a cultural "my." So is the "my" of the Warlpiri idea that only indigenous people are killed by Kurdaitcha, and the "my" of the cases in this book linking monster figures to developmental transitions and psychic structures of the individual life-course. These intimate, abhorrent doppelgängers of one's own order are also broad cultural and normative demonstratives, big statements that *this* way is how I am, *this* history is where I live. The social field of stranger relations in general, like the figure of a destructive monster defining the outer periphery of that field, is a context of regular excitation of the pragmatic conditions of category use, since between strangers the uncertainty and malleability of normative presuppositions is the heart of people's copresence (as Schutz 1944 has highlighted, among others).

The Mutual Implication of Monster Concepts and Place Concepts

The last theme that I will remark on briefly is the striking salience of "place." This book's acuity on this topic partly follows from the heavy representation of Aboriginal Australian case materials. But the Icelandic

ethnography discussed by Onnudottir has a strongly "Australian" cast as well, involving close connection of monsters to landforms, human belonging in relation to land, and human sensitivity to geographies of ownership and distance. So too the Hare Krishna engagements with demons recounted by Haddon are strongly embedded in geographies of urban Sydney, Mayapur, and the Kuala Lumpur airport, as well as in the scriptural spatial figure of a threshold that is neither inside nor outside. Many Tao patterns of engagement with Anito are likewise geography-focused. Manning shows different kinds of Kaji to be figures of rural or urban social space itself, and the core anxieties of normative "civilized" humanity that animate each space. The ghost stories discussed by Presterudstuen also have to do with belonging in relation to land, houses, and roads, and with the geography of Fiji at large as a space of racialized social division.

One reason for this salience of place in monster affairs is probably the character of spatial experience as being prototypic of categorial order in general. In my own case study of Korowai people's recent creation of new centralized villages (Stasch 2013), I draw on other scholarship in the anthropology of landscape to suggest that spatial forms often work as powerful figures of people's conditions of living historically and culturally. The situation of an actor on a surrounding landscape is similar to his or her larger situation in relation to an inheritance of normative arrangements, which are largely presupposed as ambient conditions of life, but are also accessible to perception, reflection, and some modes of transformation. The status of spatial experience as prototypic of categorization generally is well exemplified by the colloquial English idiom "out of place," as in Manning's gloss of urban Kaji as "people out of place," Eickelkamp's similar paraphrase of an Anangu description of Mamu as "a force that is out of place," or William James' and Mary Douglas' definition of dirt as "matter out of place." In this idiom, "place" is both an actual spatial location *and* a categorial order, namely the ideas and expectations socially sedimented as the definition of that location. Being "out of place" is being physically present in the place but clashing with the ideas understood to go with it.

If there is some truth to the broad thesis that landscape often works as a figure of people's condition of living by senses of order that are historical and cultural, and if there is truth also to my similar opening contention that monsters are sites through which people are in exceptional contact with their own condition of living culturally and historically, then it makes sense that monsters and place would also mutually converge. On the face of it, monsters are a different kind of entity from landscape features or other spatial forms, since they are person-like actors, often bodily, and usually mobile. Yet in regular contexts of life as well, there is typically a strong complementarity between bodily actors and land. Land provides an

anchoring context of regularities of bodily action and experience, even amounting to a kind of second body through which we experience qualities of "ownness" and capacities to act that are quite parallel to those experienced through our first bodies. As a walking violation of categorial order who is also a form of foundational contact with that order, a monster steps into this same complementarity of embodied personhood and geographic field, with the order-thematizing effects of the monster's bodily presence gaining further strength through their amplification via the medium of place. These interactions reach one kind of extreme in Onnudottir's account of Skessa's transformation into a mountain peak, provoking a contemporary human subjectivity of a "feeling [of companionability] for Skessa and the naturalness of this feeling," even in the shadow of the monster's earlier history of horrifying aggression toward humans.

If monsters are figures of *where* we are, it also emerges from the rich studies of this volume that they are figures of *when* we are, our senses of location in processes of time. Musharbash develops this theme in some depth in her introduction, and Musharbash and Manning in their ethnographic chapters give detailed accounts of the historical transformation of specific monster figures in coordination with structural transformations in the lives of humans haunted by them. With respect to even the relatively short historical temporality of the Hare Krishna movement, Haddon links changes in believers' ideas about demons to the movement's shifting internal organization and external ecology. The Fijian case described by Presterudstuen, along with all five Aboriginal Australian case studies, present very difficult material with respect to this level of the monster's embodiment of a location in history. Alimardanian links horrifying details of Burnt Woman's story to Bandjalang "community memory and long-term intergenerational trauma," while Musharbash likewise links Kurdaitcha's oppressive predatory presence across Warlpiri social space to the everyday violence of the settler colonial formation. History is "devouring" Aboriginal well-being in ways that "devouring" monsters make viscerally concrete (to use a term from Eickelkamp's account of Mamu).

The chapters of this volume are remarkable for the subtlety with which they address a number of recurrent patterns in monster phenomena, beyond the ones I have emphasized here of the pragmatic conditions of enunciation of a monster category, living in a field of strangerhood, and living in a structure of places and in a historical situation. It is thanks to this ethnographic and interpretive richness of the chapters that I have been led to formulate these specific themes in cross-cutting terms, and to trace some ways in which the themes are different faces of a single problematic of people's reflexivity about the order of their own lives, unsettled as that order may be.

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Notes on Contributors

Mahnaz Alimardanian (PhD La Trobe University, MA Australian National University, MA University of Tehran) is an honorary associate in the School of Social Sciences and Communications, La Trobe University. She has been undertaking research with Bandjalang people in northern New South Wales, Australia, and previously studied Turkmen healing ceremonies in northern Iran. She currently works as an anthropology researcher in Native Title Services, Victoria, Melbourne. Her research interest lies in the field of experience and performance, with a particular focus on spirituality, healing, shamanic ceremony, and dreams. She has explored theoretical themes of balance, liminality, ambiguity, and uncertainty in relation to modes of action and being.

Ute Eickelkamp is an ARC Future Fellow in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Sydney. Since 1995, she has been undertaking fieldwork with Central Australian Annangu Pitjantjatjara speakers, focusing on the social and aesthetic history of local art, images of destruction, and representations of kinship, as well as children's social imagination and emotional dynamics. Her publications include *Don't Ask for Stories: The Women of Ernabella and Their Art* (1999), the co-edited *Contexts of Child Development: Culture, Policy and Intervention* (with Robinson, J. Goodnow, and I. Katz, 2008), and *Growing Up in Central Australia: New Anthropological Studies of Aboriginal Childhood and Adolescence* (2011).

Leberecht Funk is a lecturer at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the Freie Universität Berlin. He is currently writing his PhD in Anthropology about the socialization of emotions among the Tao on the Taiwanese Island of Lanyu where he conducted 13 months of fieldwork from 2010 to 2011. From 2007 to 2009 he was employed as a researcher in the Department of East Asia at the Museum für Völkerkunde, Dresden.

Malcolm Haddon (PhD, Macquarie University) is a senior adviser to the New South Wales Government on multiculturalism and religious pluralism. He has taught anthropology for over fifteen years at Macquarie University and, more recently, the University of Sydney. He conducted intensive ethnographic research into the Hare Krishna movement in Australia and India and has published several articles and book chapters on the subject. His forthcoming book *Transcending Culture with the Hare Krishnas: Conversion, Translation, Revelation* will be published by Palgrave Macmillan.

Paul Manning began fieldwork in Georgia during the outbreak of the Abkhaz conflict in 1992–1993, and has done extensive fieldwork from 2001 to the present on a number of anthropological and historical projects, including the role of political meetings, oratory, and media, including cartoons, in the lead up to the Rose Revolution, architectural, aesthetic, economic, and ethnic dimensions of neoliberal reforms addressed to the cityscape. Manning has published his anthropological work on diverse topics about contemporary Georgian politics, religion, urban anthropology, and economy in *Cultural Anthropology, American Anthropologist, Ethnos*, as well as two books. As a historical anthropologist, Manning has also written extensively on nineteenth- and twentieth-century print culture and intelligentsia culture.

John Morton has worked in Anthropology and Aboriginal Studies for over 30 years. Until recently, he taught Anthropology and Aboriginal Studies at La Trobe University in Melbourne. He now works as an independent consultant anthropologist, mainly in relation to native title. He has published widely on central Australian Aboriginal religion, and has authored many reports relating to Aboriginal land rights, native title, and other matters. He has co-edited three books—*Géza Róheim's Children of the Desert II: Myths and Dreams of the Aborigines of Central Australia* (with Werner Muensterberger, 1988), *Scholar and Sceptic: Australian Aborigines and Contemporary Social Enquiry* (with Francesca Merlan and Alan Rumsey, 1997), and *The Photographs of Baldwin Spencer* (with Philip Batty and Lindy Allen, 2005).

Yasmine Musharbash is a senior lecturer and ARC Future Fellow in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Sydney (PhD Australian National University, MA Freie Universität, Berlin). She has been undertaking participant observation-based research with Warlpiri people in Central Australia since the mid-1990s, with a particular focus on everyday life, the emotions, the senses, embodiment, and the nature of social relations. She is the author of *Yuendumu Everyday: Contemporary Life in Remote Aboriginal Australia* (2009), and has published widely in journals and edited books on such themes as death, sleep, the night, and Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations in Australia.

Helena Onnudottir is a social anthropologist and a lecturer in Sociology in the School of Social Sciences and Psychology (Career Development Fellowship), University of Western Sydney. Special research areas include Aboriginal Australia, Indigenous spiritualities, religious and traditional changes, and Aboriginal/Indigenous rights to land and culture. Her current research interests include an investigation of religious changes within Aboriginal Australia. She is the co-author of *Religious Change and Indigenous Peoples: The Making of Religious Identities* (with A. Possamai and B. Turner, 2013).

Geir Henning Presterudstuen is social anthropologist and early career fellow at the School of Social Sciences and Psychology at the University of Western Sydney. He has conducted long-term ethnographic research in Fiji since 2009, and has published several journal articles and book chapters on his main research interests, which include post-colonialism and processes of ethnic and gendered self-identification at the interface of notions of tradition and modernity in Pacific communities.

Rupert Stasch is a lecturer in social anthropology at Cambridge University, and is the author of *Society of Others: Kinship and Mourning in a West Papuan Place.* Since 1995, Stasch has carried out 18 months of fieldwork with Korowai speakers of Papua, Indonesia. His main publications have examined how Korowai take up qualities of separation and otherness as a central, productive basis of social relating. He is working on a book about interactions between Korowai and international tourists. He has previously taught at the University of California, San Diego and at Reed College.

Joanne Thurman received her BA Hons in Anthropology and English from the University of Western Australia (2009), and subsequently spent four years working as an applied anthropologist with the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority, Alice Springs. In 2014 she commenced a PhD in Anthropology at the Australian National University.

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